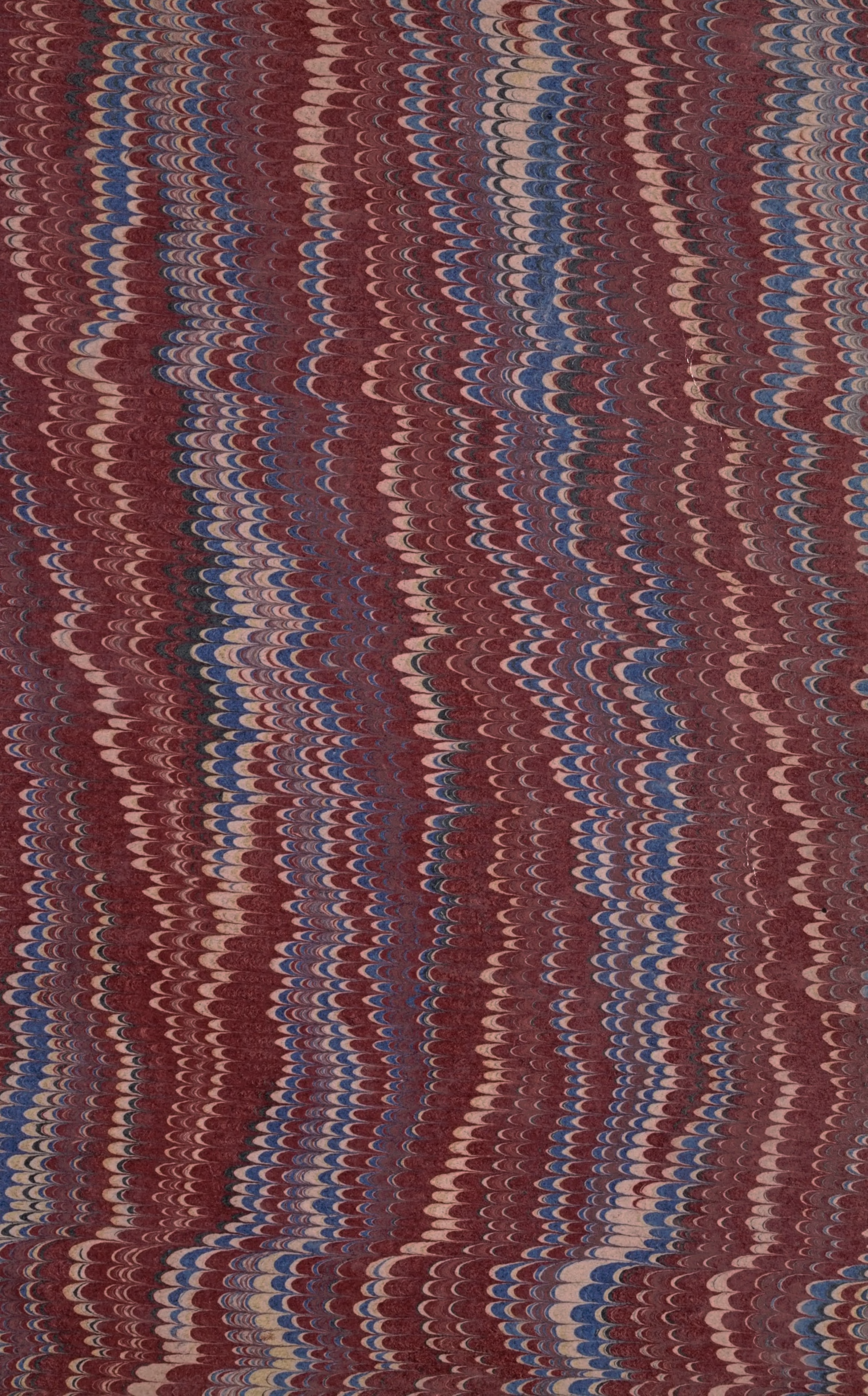


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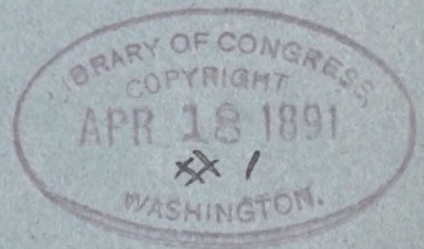
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A FIELD OF TARES

A Novel

BY

CLO. GRAVES




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A FIELD OF TARES

A Novel

✓
BY

CLO. GRAVES



NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE

1891
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TO
ANNIE IRISH

P R O E M.

THIS is the story of a woman whose life from girlhood up has been tainted and overshadowed; who has drunk to the dregs of every bitter cup that the world has to offer, before she is levelled to the dust by the weight of an unmerited disgrace; to expiate in bitterness the crime committed by another; and who sins of her own will, deliberately, to regain her lost place in Society. The woman takes her Fate into her own hands. She lives, and will live, the life of honor and respect that she deems should have been hers by right; and when at the very zenith of success, a terrible danger threatens her, a deeper gulf opens at her feet than any she has shuddered at before—when her daughter's happiness and the honor of her husband are at stake, as well as her own—the desperate woman is ready to commit the desperate crime that alone can save her from exposure. She grasps the living instrument of destruction that presents itself to her hand. With the terrible selfishness of a woman who loves, she is ready to profit by another's sin—ready even to accept the supreme sacrifice of another's life. . . . But at the moment when the last obstacle is swept from her path, and she stands a free woman again, and sole possessor of her guilty Secret, the Nemesis of Retribution descends upon and overwhelms her. She combats to the last with Death, as she has combated with Circumstance and with Destiny, and her last living moment is an assertion of her undying and undefeated Will.

CLO. GRAVES.

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A FIELD OF TARES.

Book II.

SOWING-TIME.

CHAPTER I.

A HOUSE OF SHADOWS.

NIGHT in the city of Brussels, in the year 1874. It was the hour when dreams become prophetic; when the lamp of the student burns low and dimly; when the last breath of life exhales from the clammy lips of the dying; when the currents of air hang charmed and motionless between pole and pole; when the tides of ocean lie heaped up and swelling beneath the footstool of the regnant moon.

Rain had fallen; the pavements were newly washed with it and shining, the gutters yet gurgling with memories of past repletion; it dripped from the young foliage of trees in parks and boulevards; it weighed down the lush herbage in deserted gardens; it spouted from mouths of Gothic monsters adorning ecclesiastical eaves; from ledges and cornices it trickled, or distilled from iron convent gratings like slow despairing tears. Though the season was midspring, the atmosphere had an indescribable wintry freshness, the stars in the frosty violet dome overhead an icy glitter; the piled-up roofs of many-storied buildings, the huge tenebrous outlines of palaces, churches, monuments, hotels, swam in a cold electric radiance, like icebergs resting upon the pulseless bosom of some undiscovered polar sea. But that the tramp of a patrolling policeman, or the stealthy, padding footstep of some

belated wanderer, sometimes broke the silence of dimly-lighted squares or deserted boulevards, Brussels might have been a City of the Dead.

A city of sleep certainly, but for signs of waking here and there apparent; but for lights moving along quay-edges and twinkling in the court-yard of the Custom-house; but for stealthy gleams penetrating through chinks in closed shutters of dubious cafés and early opening *estaminets*; but for the blazing casements of the ball-room at the English Embassy, yet vibrating with tread of dancers' feet, the melodious crash of military instruments that brought the last waltz to its triumphant close; but for the wakeful, yellow gas-glare streaming through the jealously drawn-down window-blinds of an apartment on the second story of a gaunt old house in the Place du Congrès.

The apartment of Madame de Quayros, in effect. One of the lions watching in the place below, sprawling supine in a pool of spilled moonlight at the base of Leopold's Column, could have told one as much.

Uncommonly well-attended had been the salon of Madame de Quayros on this particular night. Shadows of so many varieties of shape, and such dazzling efflorescences of gesture, had been thrown upon those closely-drawn buff blinds, in relief against the radiance emanating from behind them, that the soberest sense might well have grown dizzy in merely trying to distinguish one from another.

Shadows with double chins, and shadows with none. Shadows Roman-nosed and shadows snubbed. Lean shadows, stout shadows, long fantastic shadows, short grotesque ones. Shadows bifurcate—masculine almost without exception. Once or twice, indeed, a portly matron shadow, with a bosom and a bustle—the shadow of madame, beyond a doubt. Twice or once a slighter woman's shadow, a shadow in flowing draperies, with a shadowy grace in its smooth movements and a shadowy pride in the carriage of its head. Shambling waiter-shadows, bearing trays. Young and old shadows. Shadows of many nationalities, mustered upon a single spot of neutral ground, within the dominions of his Majesty King Thomas Tiddler, and presided over by Madame de Quayros in the congenial character of the Genius of Play.

But no more than this the lion could have told one—except

that, as the night gradually wore itself out, so the groups of shadows dwindled and grew less, broke up, and faded out by twos and threes. Single silhouettes succeeded, but these were shadows proper to the house, which, indeed, might have been called a House of Shadows—even in the daytime, O Lion of the Belges !

It was very cold. A piercing wind blew from the north-east. Jagged ramparts of sable cloud were building on the opposite horizon, the chilly eyes of the stars were obscured by drifting veils of grayish vapor. It was very still. One might, standing in the Place du Congrès, have heard a pin drop, a flower fall to the pavement, from one of the balconies above.

As it was, the faint chime of a striking clock, tying a quadruple knot in a slender thread of sound, broke upon the silence quite aggressively. It was a musical clock, for a tinkling little noise that, heard at a less distance, might have resolved itself into some familiar melody, followed on the stroke. It must have been, without doubt, the fastest clock in Brussels, for nearly a quarter of an hour had elapsed before, from turret, dome, and steeple, other voices, deep-throated and sonorous, proclaimed the hour of four—now near, now far, now distant, now remote, now coming closer, now startlingly nigh at hand—whirring, burring, trumpeting, clanging, chanting, moaning, humming. The atmosphere vibrated, the massive piles of masonry, the stone pavement underfoot seemed throbbing with sound. It was a brief, mad carnival of striking hammers, of whirring wheels, of spinning cylinders, of chiming bells. An instant longer it endured—no more; and as the last of the solemn voices sank to silence, the eastern sky became suffused with a tremulous greenish radiance, the stars died out, one by one, upon the windy blue overhead. From eave and parapet, from turret and gable, from belfry and tower, from leafy trees and close-clipped garden hedges, from arbor lattices and espaliers a mighty chirping rose.

“Daybreak !” piped the sparrows of Brussels, in chorus.

CHAPTER II.

OUR ENGLISH FRIEND.

DAYBREAK struggling through the closely drawn-down blinds, wrinkled and buff in color, of a certain apartment on the second story of that gaunt house in the Place du Congrès, making the sickly-yellow gaslight more yellow and sickly by contrast; creeping inch by inch across the dusty, thick-piled carpet, littered with scraps of paper and smouldering ends of cigarettes; revealing in all its ugliness the sordid disorder of a room evidently not long since deserted of its *habitués*. Scattered cards were under and close by the long table, covered with green plush, marked with lines of gold for baccarat playing. A shaded lamp stood there, somewhat askew, as though hastily set down out of a careless hand, and a palm-leaf shaped scoop for collecting counters, and an ivory croupier's rake lay sociably upon it side by side, like partners recently retired from active business. It was a lofty room, the salon, with a narrow fireplace, from which, in deference to the spring warmth of the weather, the stove had recently been banished. A long, slim looking-glass hung above the high, narrow mantel-shelf, on which stood a gilt clock, with a figure of a plump young damsel, also gilt, sitting on a wheel. There were pictures on the walls, oleagiously shining specimens of chromolithography, the "Chasse aux Lièvres" opposing the "Chasse au Loup," and a "Printemps de la Vie," supported by a cloudy representation in smoke and scarlet of the "Battle of Waterloo." Between the two long buff-blinded windows that looked upon the Place du Congrès stood a rickety marble-topped console-table, upon which a withered begonia, in a terra-cotta flower-pot, presided over an army of empty bottles, sticky-footed liqueur glasses and tumblers, crumby plates, dirty knives and forks—the *disjecta membra* of a hasty stand-up supper. Above hung a convex mirror in a chipped ormolu frame, so directly opposite the folding-doors opening from the squeezey little staircase vestibule as to present to the entering guest of madame his own reflection,

curiously foreshortened, and, as it were, in the act of taking a header into dubious society. To the right-hand of the guest so situated another door presented itself, leading, presumably, to sleeping apartments beyond, while upon his left heavy curtains of dusty red plush, falling from the careless guardianship of a family of dissipated plaster Loves, guarded the sanctity of madame's boudoir.

The curtains fell together in heavy folds, bulging strangely about the middle. There might have been a draught blowing behind them from an open window in the boudoir, for they were stirred every now and then with a sound that was like a heavy breath; at least, so it seemed to one of two secretive-looking, greasily-clad, silent-footed, close-cropped Belgian waiters, who, under the superintendence of madame—arrayed in evening splendors of yellow satin and black lace, rather rusty, with garnets heaving on her bosom and twinkling on her plump white hands—were busily removing the débris of the supper.

He was so moved by curiosity regarding that draught from the boudoir, was this particular Belgian waiter, as to take advantage of an apparent lapse of watchfulness on the part of madame—who stood in an attitude of meditation by the fireplace, her large arms crossed upon her massive bosom, her large eyes drooping, and a smile upon her lips—to approach the curtains. But a slight cough from madame caused him to start guiltily and withdraw the hand that had been gingerly extended towards one of those red plush folds; and as the eye of madame met and dwelt unbenevolently upon his own, he shuffled out after his companion with his burden of glasses, a very crestfallen Belgian waiter indeed.

A charming woman, Madame de Quayros! A goddess at whose somewhat battered shrine worshippers of all nationalities had paid homage. Adorable still, though proprietress of graces that had reduplicated, of charms that had expanded with the march of that very ungallant old person, Time. Of polyglot gifts, of cosmopolitan attractions, of varied experiences—a citizeness of the world, a wandering Arab, as she would sometimes call herself in moments of pathos—continually traversing the parched deserts of life in search of some green oasis—the greener the better—in which to pitch that ever-shifting tent of hers. A hardy old navigator, who had dropped anchor in many strange

harbors, and 'sounded many strange depths, and sailed many strange seas—uncommonly close to the wind, too, in all of them! Under the shadow of a certain sable-hued piece of bunting, too well known to need a name, but rendered forever memorable in song and story by the glorious careers of Monsieur Lolonnois, of Mynheer Esquemeling, of Mister William Avery, and of Captain Kidd.

Left alone, madame, moving to the console-table, filled a little glass with cognac from a crystal liqueur-barrel that stood there, and drained it. With a preoccupied air she drew a little cigarette from a little case, mechanically sought for a match, and, not finding one, turned to the shaded lamp that cast a mellow circle of light on the verdant plush of the baccarat-table. As she bent above it, those closed curtains of the boudoir were again agitated by a breath—like a heavy sigh. Madame started, almost imperceptibly, and a curious expression dawned over her features. She exhaled a puff of cigarette smoke, and began to pace noiselessly up and down, stealthily to and fro in front of the veiled alcove, getting nearer to the curtains with each turn. She came to a stand-still in front of them at last, and stretched out her hand deliberately to part them. But even as the crooked tips of her plump white fingers brushed the crimson folds, they recoiled—the out-stretched arm dropped to her side. A woman had entered suddenly by the folding-doors leading from the staircase vestibule, and, coming close behind madame, touched her lightly on the shoulder.

A handsome woman, and young, with defiant eyes, and still more defiant lips. A woman at terrible odds with the world—brazened, reckless, hardened, but with something of the womanly nature left in her still. A woman in sweeping silks, with half-bare arms and bosom, with half-dead flowers at her breast, with diamonds, false as the smile of madame herself, gleaming on her throat and in her hair; with a large, loose mantle of some dark material, heavily bordered with fur, falling superbly from her. A woman unmistakably of English race, and yet with an undulating grace in her slow movements, a subtle witchery in her glance, that denoted foreign rearing—possibly an admixture of the Saxon tide flowing in her veins with foreign blood. Looking on her face—a face that separated itself strangely from crowds of other faces as strange to you seen bending from a

theatre-box, or glancing from a carriage, or at the other side of a *table-d'hôte*, moving along a thronged gallery or a great promenade—you might have called it a strange face, or a proud face, a weary face, a fierce face, a melancholy face, a brooding face, a watchful face; a face all the more remarkable for the mass of hair that crowned it like a shining helmet, hair faintly golden in the light, pale brown in the shadow, already blended, despite the woman's youth, with heavy streaks of gray. But always a face to be remembered. "Who is she?" you would have interrogated as she passed you by, a stranger and unheeding. "What is she?" you would have asked, if you and she had met, and she had spoken a few words to you. "Why is she—?" you would have exclaimed, finding only increased bewilderment in knowledge of her. Reply to two out of the three questions only being possible in the case of Mrs. Dudleigh—charming name, Dudleigh!—the friend and partner of Madame de Quayros.

Mrs. Dudleigh, with great composure, stood and looked at madame, and madame, whose equanimity had been seriously disturbed by the suddenness of her entrance, but who had had time to recover, sustained and returned the scrutiny with admirable coolness.

"You are late, my dearest," madame remarked in English. Mistress of many languages was Madame de Quayros, and her English was admirable—like herself.

"Your clock there," returned Mrs. Dudleigh, comparing the dial of a tiny watch with that of the gilt timepiece on the mantel-shelf, "is a quarter of an hour too fast."

"To business, then," rejoined madame, with a kind of sinister gayety in her nod, and her fanged and gleaming smile. "To business, business, business."

"Our business can wait," the other woman said, "till I have had a little conversation with you, Dorothea."

"Conversation!" repeated madame. "By my faith! a pretty hour for conversation this."

"I have something to say to you," Mrs. Dudleigh answered, "that must be said to-night."

"You always were and always will be obstinate," declared madame. "My efforts to reform your character in that respect have been efforts thrown away. In others you do my teaching credit, it must be confessed."

"I congratulate you, and your friends and patrons have more reason to congratulate you on the result of your labors," returned the other, with a sneer.

"Our friends and patrons. Why not 'our,' my sweetest?" demanded madame, with a tigerish smile. "Have you not been partner with me these two years? Have you not always share?"

"In your projects—your enterprises—yes. In your risk and danger, yes again. In the certainty of ultimate detection and exposure, yes, most certainly. But in nothing else have I had my share, and you know it. The proceeds of our last Parisian campaign, for instance?"

Madame spat upon the carpet, and relieved her features of an energetic grimace.

"Were miserably small."

"It would appear that those who declare swindling to be one of the most thriving branches of industry are mistaken," commented Mrs. Dudleigh. "The contents of the little valise, of which, at the express request of our young friend, the banker of Frankfort, we consented to take charge—?"

"Bonds which were not negotiable—circular notes upon banks and bureaus of exchange, which it would be dangerous for our agents to approach. . . . A few *rouleaux* and a bundle of love letters from the amiable wife of the partner of Monsieur the Banker. Nothing more."

"The fiend of the mediæval legends used to pay down hard cash—solid ingots—to the proprietors of the souls he purchased," went on Mrs. Dudleigh, in the same even voice, leaning one round white elbow on the mantel-shelf, and meeting madame's furious stare with calm, unhostile eyes. "It is for you, my Dorothea, to drive a harder market even than the devil."

"You jest always," madame snarled. "You jest at everything: at the police, at the prison, at the galleys, at the guillotine."

"Not at the guillotine. I hold that, of all French institutions, in the greatest respect—it made me a widow."

"It make you someting else one of these days, perhaps," hinted madame.

"Haven't I said scores of times, that, unlike you, I draw the line at capital offences?"

"I should advise you to alter this tone without delay." Thus

madame, in a yellow fury, tapping her foot upon the carpet. "It is a mistaken one. These moods, too, are not to be cherished; they are dangerous, like weapons that cut both ways."

"You took a dangerous weapon in your grasp when first you made up your mind to handle me."

"A weapon of English make, of keen temper, and excellent edge. Better for it to have served my purpose than to have been left rusting in a prison of France!"

"I wish, with all my soul, it was rusting in a French prison now," Mrs. Dudleigh broke out, passionately.

"Or in a Belgian one," amended madame, with a movement of impatience. "Permit me to inform you that, as matters stand at present, there is a handsome chance of your wish being fulfilled."

She drew a soiled and crumpled scrap of paper from the recesses of her corsage and tossed it to her companion.

"You recognize the style? You have seen the handwriting before? You acknowledge the source of information as unimpeachable?"

"Being the Head Office of Police itself. Well, forewarned is forearmed. You have made all arrangements, I suppose? You have spoken to the people of the house?"

"Exactly. Descourtes is quite prepared for anything that may arise. It is very simple. When Monsieur the Chief of Police arrives to-morrow night—"

"To-night, you mean!"

"There will be no one here to receive him. Observe the admirable result of our not occupying the same apartments. You will be able to join me at Paris in a few hours without having aroused the suspicions of a single creature here."

"A capital plan, but travelling costs money, and I have none."

"None?"

"Not a single napoleon."

"It is awkward, that."

"I share your sentiments. Come! determine what is to be done. Do I join you, Florette, the parrot, Fifi, and the other members of our interesting firm, at Paris, or do I remain behind in Brussels to make myself agreeable to Monsieur the Chief of Police? He is a charming person, I am told. I am quite anxious to make his acquaintance."

"You shall!"

A third voice, that broke in upon the colloquy of madame and her charming partner with startling effect. A hoarse voice, its accents broken and halting, coming from behind the drawn curtains of madame's boudoir.

"You shall show me that card, you d——d swindling black-guard!"

"God of Gods!" madame muttered, white to her very lips. "But he startled me."

Mrs. Dudleigh, leisurely unbuttoning her gloves, looked at her with a smile, saying:

"You really are growing nervous, Dorothea. Our English Friend is asleep and dreaming—"

"In the chair into which he stumbled when he rose from the écarté-table," nodded madame. "Behold him!"

With a quick, noiseless movement she drew aside one of the heavy curtains that parted the salon from the boudoir beyond, letting in a flood of sickly pink-tinted light from unextinguished tapers burning in shrines of pink glass. It was a gaudy little Continental boudoir, replete with blue satin-covered furniture and ornate with gilding; a musky-smelling little bower, sacred to nothing but écarté; sacrifice made, however, to the religious proprieties in the shape of a putty-faced, gaudily-colored plaster medallion of the Madonna in a shrine upon the wall, looking simperingly down upon the slumbering features of Our English Friend.

Our English Friend was huddled sidewise in a great velvet arm-chair immediately behind the red velvet curtains, and so close to them, in fact, that they must have been stirred by his breath—touched by his drooping head. Heavy and lumpish was Our English Friend, and his breathing was stertorous and irregular. He seemed, as far as might be guessed from his present invertebrate attitude, a well-built, middle-sized, muscular man of twenty-seven or so, and though his blunt features were swollen from the effects of the overnight debauch, and his close-curling, brownish-red locks lay damp and matted upon his flushed and veinous forehead; though his travelling suit of gray tweed was disordered, his collar agape, his necktie loosened and dragged awry, the English friend of Madame de Quayros was plainly a gentleman.

"He snores, in effect, this brute," observed madame, with profound disgust. "But Englishmen are always *bête*. They cannot even be drunk gracefully."

The sleeping man stirred and murmured. Perhaps a current of fresher air coming from the salon brought with it some quickening of the sluggish blood—some lightening of the fumes obscuring his drugged brain.

"He dreams and grimaces, as you see; but he will not waken, be assured of that."

Madame, having listened at the doors of the salon one after the other, having drained a second little glass of cognac and lighted a second cigarette, had rejoined her partner, who stood absorbed in meditative contemplation of the features of the unconscious man.

"He has had his little dose, has Our English Friend."

"He looks as though the little dose had been a large one," the other returned. She stretched out her hand towards a miniature dumb-waiter standing within reach of the arm-chair, as if about to lift a partly emptied coffee-cup that stood upon it. But Madame de Quayros, anticipating the movement, whipped away the vessel in a twinkling.

"I gave him neither too little nor too much, if that is what you mean." The voice of madame was hoarse with passion; the Spanish execration that accompanied the words was none the less fierce because her accents were necessarily subdued. "Because I once lose my presence of mind, my cool a—judgment and make one error—one mistake, is it to be always thrown at my teeth?" She moved to the console-table, poured water from a glittering carafe, and rinsing the coffee-cup with an unsteady hand, poured the contents away to the last drop upon the withered begonia. "Is it because this brute—this animal—makes love to you that you are careful of him, eh? Now, now, now," she went on, hissing, "you, who will that geese should be plucked with tenderness, and pigs made bacon of so that it hurts them not, will you arrange with Our English Friend, or shall I?"

"You, if you have the courage," said the other, contemptuously.

"You know that I have not—not now," returned madame, furiously. "If I had it would have been done before. You are possessed of the devil this night, I believe, Catherine."

For answer, Mrs. Dudleigh's white firm hand was stretched towards the man in the arm-chair. The hand had glided within the lappel of his coat, was being cautiously withdrawn with some small object in its grasp, when the victim moved slightly and uttered the word "Mother." For an instant it seemed as if the woman was about to faint. She turned deadly pale—she staggered back, dropping, in the abandonment of her recoil, a small roll of notes upon the carpet. But she uttered no cry, for the hand of her guardian angel stifled the utterance upon her lips.

CHAPTER III.

THE BLACK-LEATHER POCKET-BOOK.

"A THOUSAND devils!" madame spluttered. "What have you seen? What have you heard? Are you mad, Catherine?"

"He said 'Mother,'" the other returned, shivering, and looking at her strangely.

"He should have said 'Idiot,'" spit out madame.

"I hate that word," the woman rejoined. "It has no place on the lips of a brute like that, when one has heard it spoken by a—" Her tone changed. "Have you the money?" she asked, feverishly.

No need to ask. Madame had pounced upon the notes before they could well have reached the carpet.

"How much is there? How much?"

"About two thousand francs."

"No more than that?"

"Count them for yourself."

"You are right. No more than that."

"The days of grand *coups* are over," madame said, with a sigh. "Men are poorer than they were when I was a young girl. If he has gold upon him it will be but a few pieces. However, it will be well to search."

"Philip!"

The name, distinctly spoken, sounded through the room.

"Silence, pig!" snarled madame.

But the slumberous voice was not to be so easily silenced. It broke out again :

"Suspense ! I can't bear it ! My poor mother ! Life or death, the message said."

"Was that a footstep on the landing ? Is any one listening at the door ?"

"I will go and see," Madame de Quayros whispered back, and vanished.

He moved and groaned and spoke again.

"Late," he said. *"Last train gone ! Nothing before to-morrow morning. Whole night to wait. I'll go out and walk it off ; I'll go out and walk it off."*

Something delayed the return of Madame de Quayros. The confidences of Our English Friend were reposed in the bosom of a single listener.

"Not safe at night in Brussels — man—valuable—property about him. Give it, Philip—take care of. Tell landlord to lock it up ! Who's to know—I broke the Bank at Homburg ?—Who's to know about the six thousand pounds ? Sheer nonsense, I tell you—sheer nonsense."

The hand of Our English Friend fumbled at his breast with a touch as wandering and uncertain as that of a sick man.

"The money's safe, I tell you ! Chained to me. Never left me day or night since—Homburg ? What, you won't be convinced ? Obstinate devil ! Well, if you will have it, take it, and be d——d to you."

He rose to his feet and stood upright, breathing heavily, and swaying perilously from side to side. His swollen features—his blindly staring eyeballs—turned towards the white face, the shining eyes, of the listening woman. Suddenly a change came over him, the tense muscles of his throat relaxed, his eyelids drooped, his head sank backward, his out-stretched arm fell leadenly to his side. A long sigh escaped his parted lips. Like one stricken with palsy he dropped back into the seat from which he had risen.

As this happened, the woman sank to her knees upon the carpet. She held her breath. She crawled towards the man in the chair. Her snake-like movement brought her close to him. Breathlessly she crouched at his knee as she detached from a chatelaine she wore a little pair of scissors, a womanly toy, with

chased handles and sharp curved blades. Warily she unbuttoned the tweed waistcoat of Our English Friend. Sleep—the iron sleep of the opiate—had descended upon him. He spoke—he moved, no more. There was a faint grating sound—sharp steel devouring linen—shearing through silk. The woman went about the business as mechanically as an automaton. What she did she scarcely seemed to do of her own purpose—of her own will. Unflinchingly she put her hand into his breast. Slowly, cautiously, she drew to light the treasure hidden there.

It was a square, somewhat bulky, black-leather pocket-book, suspended round the man's neck by a thin, glistening steel chain. Delicately, deftly, the woman opened it, and with practised swiftness emptying it of its contents, restored it to its hiding-place on his heart. Notes and billets, of this the first glance, even in the act of rising to her feet, assured her—billets and notes of the banks of France, Germany, and England, to the value of a large sum. Bending at the baccarat-table in the light of the shaded lamp, she counted the crackling tissue-papers with white fingers that scarcely had a tremor in them. Counted them twice—counted them three times. And then she lifted her head and drew a long, deep breath.

“A hundred and forty thousand francs—nearly six thousand pounds, English money! And to think that such a sum might have escaped me! To think that such a chance might have been missed!”

She looked round at the man in the chair.

“I have to thank an overdose of morphia and your own imprudence for much, my countryman,” she said. “You might have intrusted your treasure to your comrade; you might have placed it in charge of the landlord of your hotel. Your native obstinacy is not one of the least of your charms, my English Friend.”

“What is this?”

Madame de Quayros, always stealthy of foot, having returned, was standing behind her.

“What is this?” reiterated madame, leaning over and darting one crooked white talon at the money on the table.

“It means that your often quoted proverb of the reaped field is at fault, my dear. In the case of Our English Friend, the second harvest is richer than the first.”

"Angel! I must positively embrace you," thus rapturously madame, with watering teeth.

"Let us defer that affectionate ceremony till we have settled our accounts," said the other.

"Absurd! How much time have we for the settlement of accounts? Do you think that our friend there, when he recovers, will take his loss with resignation? I tell you that there will be a hue-and-cry. Money you shall have for present expenses. When we meet at Paris, everything else can be arranged. In the mean time I will take charge of these notes—these billets—strictly in the interests of Our English Friend. Do you not hear a' me?" queried madame, with acerbity. "Is there to be more delay? Will you give me the money or no?"

For answer, Mrs. Dudleigh gathered up the scattered notes and thrust them, crumpled together, into the bosom of her dress, where madame's glance followed them meaningly.

"I will not give you the money," she said.

Madame, backing to the console-table, stretched out her hand softly behind her, and possessed herself of something that lay there among the débris of the supper—a keen-edged something, bright and glittering.

"You will not give me the money, eh?" she redemanded, menacingly.

"Some of it, perhaps, but under conditions, and upon my own terms."

"Under conditions and on your own terms?" madame sneered, more like a man-eating tigress than ever now, meditating a deadly spring.

"Put down that knife. Ring, if you like." For madame, abandoning the weapon, had made a movement to the bell. "Call your people—you know there is not one of them who would dare to lay a lawless hand upon me. You know the weapon that I carry," said Mrs. Dudleigh, meeting madame's lurid glare with calm, unquailing eyes. "You know the sort of woman fate and circumstances have made me. You know that I could and would, in case of need, use this, and use it well."

"This" being a small revolver, ivory-mounted—a pretty toy enough for death to lurk in.

"A trick of the theatre," madame said, voicelessly. "Come, explain yourself. What are you going to do?"

"I am going to part with you here, to-night, and forever."

"Is this a sudden resolution?"

"It is the outcome of a great deal of reflection on my part, most amiable of friends."

"You begin to quarrel with your bread and butter somewhat late in the day," madame observed, with another of those fanged smiles.

"I have quarrelled with my bread and butter for a long while. I have quarrelled with the very air I breathe. I have quarrelled with the very sun for shining on me," said Catherine Dudleigh, "through the windows of rooms like this."

With unutterable loathing of her companion, of her surroundings, of herself, she looked about her.

"I have long been weary of our life of falsehood and imposture, of treachery and crime," she said. "Not that I pity our victims much—they are all born to one common end, and would be fleeced, sooner or later, poor wretches! by rogues even more unscrupulous than ourselves. But I have pitied myself."

She leaned one hand lightly upon the table by her side, and looked out before her, darkly, as if she looked into the past.

"While I have crawled in the slime of loathsome by-ways," she went on, "women no purer in heart, no more unstained in conscience, no more tenderly reared than I was, have passed me by unheeding. And at such times I have cried out to them in my heart, 'I could have been as good as *you* if I had had a *chance* like yours. *You* might have been worse than I am if you had led a life like *mine*.' Poverty, misery, disgrace, shame—each and all of these things I have known from my girlhood up. What chance had I? None! But I have got my chance now, and I am going to make the most of it."

"I think," said madame, "that you are going to make yourself one fool."

"Perhaps so. I am going to divide this money equally with you," said Mrs. Dudleigh, with a gleam of her old manner, "before we part to-night. After that you are at liberty to strike my name out of the books of the firm, with the appended memorandum, 'Retired from business.'"

She drew the crumpled handful of bank-notes roughly from her bosom. As she did so, some small shining object fell lightly to the carpet and rolled under the table. But she

did not see it, and madame had no eyes for anything but the money.

"One-half for you, one-half for me. You see I treat you generously, Dorothea."

"Hah!" madame grunted, dexterously fingering the crackling tissue papers. "This decision is unalterable, eh? You are really going?"

"I am really going. Good-bye."

"*Bon voyage*," said madame, with a hand on the door of her apartment. She gave an ineffable foreign shrug. She nodded coolly and left the room.

As Mrs. Dudleigh raised her heavy mantle from the floor and threw it round her shoulders, the first signs of awakening life began to manifest themselves in the streets of Brussels. The first sunbeams penetrated into the room. One lighted on the forehead of the sleeping man.

Her eyes lighted on him, too. Softly she approached him and drew the displaced curtains again before him, shielding him from the day. Then she went to the door, but on its threshold she turned and looked back.

"Another's wrong dragged me down level with the dust. Let my own sin raise me up again. I buy my freedom from a hideous bondage, my deliverance from a living hell, with the money *you* would have wasted in drink and in play. In whose hands shall it meet the better uses? In *yours* or in *mine*?"

Not even a sigh, this time, in answer, from the shrouded figure in the chair.

"So ends the old wicked life forever," she said, more gently. "A new life opens before me, a new dawn breaks, bright with the promise of better days to come. My English Friend, good-bye."

Then she went out. As the doors closed behind her, the gilt clock upon the mantel-piece struck the hour of five and played a tinkling little melody. Long before it had ended its laborious runs and flourishes, her retreating footsteps had ceased to echo on the stair.

CHAPTER IV.

AWAKENING.

MORNING noises in the streets. Voices calling, carts lumbering by. A clattering of wooden-soled shoes—probably a band of flower-sellers passing on their way to the market of the Grande Place. The gruff barking of dogs harnessed to the little carts of the milk-women; the shrill reproaches of their owners, “*Plus vite, Jehan! Plus vite, Edouard! Méchant,*” and the thump of stout umbrellas upon canine ribs.

Now comparative silence; a solemn creaking; a measured tread of horses’ feet going by. Perhaps a funeral cortege on the road to the cemetery. A halting step—maybe that of the old rag-picker of yesterday, with his basket on his back. An outburst of halloaing—probably a troop of red-cheeked chorister boys on their way to the cathedral, under the charge of a priestly usher in a black *soutane*. Now a tremendous jingling—a guard of artillery, most likely, returning from the Palace of Laeken to the Caserne Elizabeth. They don’t march like soldiers, these Belgians—brave Belgians!—but slip and slide unsteadily over the stones.

From a long way off a clock striking six—a musical clock, that plays the duet from “*Il Trovatore*” with a note here and there dropped out like a tooth.

“Home to our mountains
Let us return, love!”

“Uncomfortable, these foreign beds—too short, always, and too bumpy. Hung round with sombre, stuffy curtains, surmounted by canopies nodding with plumes, like hearses out of mourning. Green curtains. No—red. Odd that they should have changed color since last night! Odd that the window should have changed place with the mantel-piece, and that the

mantel-piece, with the two ormolu candlesticks, should have disappeared entirely.

"I slept at the Belle Vue Hotel last night. Is this the Belle Vue? Is this myself, with a headache as though a legion of imps, armed with red-hot forge-hammers, were beating at my brain? With a raging thirst upon me that impels me to rise and grope about for water? With a torpid numbness on me that holds me down, that weighs upon my limbs like fetters of lead?

"A bell ringing somewhere. Somebody must be dead. Perhaps the hammering imps are not imps after all, but a legion of undertakers knocking nails into a coffin. A coffin for a dying woman!—a coffin for a dead woman! Old or young?—I can't recollect! The headache comes back, raging and tearing with the effort to think. . . . Knocking, over and over again. The waiter, perhaps—somebody had told the waiter to call him early in the morning, for he had to bathe and breakfast and to catch the mail for Calais. The English mail, when did it leave the Station du Nord? and was Reginald Hawley the man who was left behind? The man with a headache!—the man who had something to remember?"

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More knocking, more ringing, more hammering at the staircase door. As they burst it in the sleeper awoke, tried to shake off the numbing drowsiness that held him; tried to rise to his feet, but failed and fell back heavily; tried again more successfully, and staggered out, dazed and blinking, into the blinding light of day, holding by the curtains. At first the room seemed full of faces, but by-and-by the number dwindled to three or four. One of them familiar, belonging to the grasp upon his hand, the arm upon his shoulder, the friendly voice in his ears. Others, three; dough-colored, clean-shaven; two or them topped with soldierly forage caps, and surmounting neat uniforms of braided blue; the third belonging to a bald-headed official in a black frock-coat and gray trousers.

"The birds have flown, monsieur."

"It would appear that there has been an exodus, my Gaspard."

"It will be as well to make a reconnoissance, monsieur."

"As a matter of form, but you will find nothing."

The heavy tread of thick-soled boots over the carpet—the opening and closing of a door.

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“Hawley? Dear old fellow!”

“Philip?”

“Run to earth; hunted down; found at last; and thank God for it!” the friendly voice said, between laughter and tears.

“Am I drunk or dreaming? What has happened? My head—spinning round and round.”

The boy (for he was hardly more) supported Hawley to a chair, and stooped over him in genuine sympathy and alarm.

“He doesn’t hear me! He doesn’t see me! He doesn’t speak to me! What can be the matter with him?”

In his distress, he looked round at the bald man in the frock-coat. The bald man was ready to meet the emergency.

“Milord will allow me.” Turning the chair so as to face the windows through which, the blinds having been drawn up, the warm spring sunshine came streaming. “The carafe there—on the side-table. A thousand thanks, milord. If milord will sprinkle the forehead of his friend, at the same time blowing upon it, the result will be favorable to the wishes of milord. Observe, then” (lifting the eyelids of the patient, one after another, with an air of genuine scientific interest), “how strongly the pupils are contracted. That is one of the principal effects of an overdose of the drug usually employed in these cases. But see! the friend of milord revives already.”

Revived enough to grasp his friend’s hand, to stammer incoherent answers to his eager questions, to stand upright and walk up and down at last, leaning on the boyish arm.

“Saw you leave the hotel last night, tried to follow you, got lost among some confounded turnings and had to come back like a fool. Sat up all night, worried the landlord to desperation. He thought me mad, or a dry-nurse in trousers, until I explained, and then he woke up and behaved like a Belgian brick,” the young fellow said, flushing.

“You explained to him?” Reginald Hawley repeated, dazedly.

The other looked at him anxiously. “How you’d had a cable-gram from England to say that your mother was dangerously ill, and how you’d pelted off to the station like mad, only to find

that the last train had gone, and the next mail might be expected to start at seven in the morning—”

“I remember,” said Reginald Hawley. He drew a long breath. “There was a whole night of suspense before me—the anxiety was more than I could bear. I said I would go out and walk it off. I remember.”

He moved away from the supporting arm and continued his walk alone. With his disordered hair, his disordered dress, his sodden face and bloodshot eyes, he made a sorry picture.

“I went out and walked about,” he repeated.

The younger man looked at him eagerly.

“I met a man I knew — De Hamel — little fellow in the Guides.”

“I know. You were seen with him last night. When things grew desperate we went and hunted him out. He was beastly drunk, but he gave us the clew we wanted.”

“It was he who brought me here. We had a bottle of champagne or two. . . . I wanted to forget the worry that was tearing me. . . . You understand? Then he said, ‘Come with me; I’ll show you a place where we can have a quiet rubber of *écarté*. I’ll introduce you to a handsome woman. I went with him, I saw her; she *was* a handsome woman, by Heaven!’ He struck his clinched fist upon the table. “Not the sort of woman one would have expected to meet in a gambling-hell,” he went on, with a hoarse laugh. “Proud as a princess of the blood. D——n her!”

Sir Philip Lidyard and the bald headed official exchanged glances—a questioning glance, which said “Doesn’t he know?” and a superior glance with a faint trace of contempt in it, which said plainly enough, “Wait. He is stupid at present, but by-and-by he will find out, and then—”

Sir Philip was too much in earnest to wait. He looked at Reginald Hawley, who was now sitting in a chair by the table, with one arm lying upon it and his head sunken on his breast. In another moment his anxiety betrayed itself in words.

“You played *écarté* last night,” he broke out. “Did you win or lose? Hawley, tell me—. What about the money?” He crossed the room to Hawley’s side, he grasped his shoulder and shook it, in the heat of his agitation. “What about your Hom-burg winnings? What about the six thousand pounds?”

Then, and not till then, Hawley remembered. He glanced

down, noting for the first time the disorder of his dress. He put his hand into his breast and drew out a black-leather pocket-book, attached by a stout swivel to a thin steel chain.

The pocket-book was empty!

The bald-headed man and Sir Philip exchanged glances again. "As might have been anticipated," the bald-headed man expressed dumbly, and Sir Philip answered back, "Quite so."

The man who had been robbed was the first to break the silence.

"Why don't you call me an idiot?" he said, hoarsely, looking towards Sir Philip. "Why don't you call me a pig-headed fool? I've been both. Though you—you might have stopped my going out last night. Couldn't you see I was mad? Mad with suspense and worry, you who call yourself my friend! Though why should I blame you?" he said, meeting the silent reproach in the other's eyes. "My own obstinacy—my cursed bad-luck, are to blame; not you."

He looked at the empty pocket-book and weighed it in his hand.

"I've been a poor devil all my life. A younger son on a beggarly pittance. Duns, debts, and disgrace, the burden of a tune that seems likely to go on forever. That night at Homburg I risked all I had, a pitiful hundred pounds, on color. I won. I piled it on, every penny. I won again and again. The bank was broken. I walked out of the Kursaal a rich man. I'd got the chance I had always wanted—the nest-egg that might hatch out millions by-and-by. I carried it about me wherever I went; it never left me day or night. I was like a child with a new toy—a girl with her first love-letter—a mother with her first-born. The money was my hope, my all. And I've been robbed of it!"

He ended there, and got up shivering, as if with cold. The effects of the drug under the influence of which he still labored, of the mental and physical shock he had sustained, were visible in the deep lines graven about his mouth and on his forehead and round his bloodshot eyes.

"Why should we stop here?" he asked, feverishly. "What are we waiting for? Let us go back to the hotel. Let us go to the police station. It may not be too late to trace the thieves—to recover the money!" He put his hand to his head, he looked vacantly round. "I haven't got my hat," he said; "I can't go out without my hat."

The bald-headed official, stimulated by a certain crisp and crack-

ling acknowledgment of services rendered, which had stealthily found its way from Sir Philip's palm into his own, instantly busied himself with tremendous zeal in the recovery of the missing head-gear, summoning blue-coated subordinates to aid in the search, rummaging in dusty corners, diving under tables. "Just Heaven! The hat was nowhere to be found! But, behold! here a bijou—a trinket—which might, or might not, be the property of the friend of milord."

The friend of milord took it from the extended palm of the official. It was a plain gold locket. It had been trodden on, and the hinges were broken, so that it fell open in his hand. It had been made to hold two portraits. From one of the little crystal ovals, set in a shining frame, the eyes of a handsome woman looked out and met his own. He knew the face again. He looked at it an instant, then thrust the locket in his breast, and went away bareheaded from the House of Shadows with his friend.

A telegraphic message was waiting for him at the hotel. He took it, and opened it. It told him that the one creature in the world who had loved him was dead—the last link that bound him to home was broken.

He shook his head when Sir Philip urged him to return with him to England. Their paths lay in different directions, he said, and he had work to do in Brussels. No need to ask what the work was.

To trace the stolen money! To hunt down the thieves—the thief! And no argument, no entreaties, no representations of the hopelessness of such an endeavor, were strong enough to turn him from his purpose. So they parted.

He went late one night, and looked up at the windows of the house in the Place du Congrès. No light shone behind them, no changing pageant of shadows moved across the blinds.

Big drops of rain plashed on the pavement. The moon, a pale fugitive, fled away southward, with black storm-clouds chasing her, and a shrill wind baying at her heels. The night was overcast and threatening, but not so threatening as the face of the man. He clinched his hand, and shook it in the air, as he looked up at the blind windows, and thrust it in his breast again as he turned away.

And the rain came down heavily, and blotted out the House of Shadows in an instant.

Book II.

GROWING-TIME.

CHAPTER I.

THE KAVANAGHS.

SEVEN English miles inland from the wild tumbling water, the jagged headlands and wave-bitten sandstone cliff-ranges of the Norfolk coast; seven miles straight as the crow flies, across a noble wooded country; over villages nestling in the shadow of ancient flint-built churches with stately square towers, reared in the stormy mediæval times; over an old Roman encampment on the crown of a sandy heath, where the north-east wind lies in wait for the traveller on most days of the year, with a blowsy greeting; through tall gates, guarded by lichen-spotted heraldic monsters; up a mile-long avenue of noble Spanish laurels; past a long stretch of well-fenced meadow land; past a paddock, shadowed by great elms; past a swinging five-barred gate; past the gardener's cottage and the dairy-house kept by the keeper's wife. And the ivy-mantled walls, the gray towers and quaint twisted chimneys of Selbrigg Hall rose up to view against the sombre background of a dense plantation of Norwegian firs.

From the front view of the Hall not a flower was visible, not even a standard rose-tree impinged upon the smooth simplicity of the stretch of emerald lawn, shadowed here and there by noble beeches—from which the time-worn façade of the noble old Tudor mansion reared itself, flashing back the sunlight from its deep mullioned casements, crowned at its summit with a stone parapet, in which an inscription had been cut out, or rather left out, by the founder, so that the words

Gloria Deo in Excelsis

might stand written in sky-letters of changing hues, as long as the house itself should hold together.

The house was built with wings. It formed, in fact, three sides of a parallelogram, the missing side of the geometrical figure being represented, after an extended fashion, by the south wall of an antique garden, beyond which the roofs of the stable-buildings were seen. Into this garden looked almost all the rearward windows of the house.

The race of the founder had long been extinct. The vaults in Ketton Old Church were gorged with their coffins of ancient stone and more modern lead. The Hall had had many owners. For the last three generations it had been the country-seat of the Kavanagh family.

Of that family but two male representatives existed—Colonel Kavanagh, the present proprietor of the Hall, a retired officer of the East Indian Staff Corps, and a younger brother, of wandering proclivities and eccentric habits, from whom, at the period of the story's opening, no personal communication had been received for many years. That he was alive was proved from time to time by the periodical presentation of drafts upon his London agents signed with his well-known scrawl, and forwarded by the representatives of European banking firms in different quarters of the globe. An income of five hundred a year—a modest fortune—inherited by him as a younger son, enabled George Kavanagh to indulge his nomadic proclivities to their fullest extent. Different European countries yielded up proofs of his existence from time to time. Lands untrodden yet by the professional explorer had known the impression of his wandering steps. He was not a collector of curiosities; he had no special craze for entomological, botanical, or zoological pursuits. He was no sportsman, but a hunter in one sense of the word—an indefatigable hunter of human beings. From his earliest years the strange, wandering race known throughout the habitable world as the gypsies had owned a special fascination for George Kavanagh. While still a boy, he had in some inexplicable way attained to intimacy with the wandering race whose strongest instinct is the instinct of clanship, whose strongest passion is that of hatred of the Gentile and the stranger not to them in blood allied. Familiar with the gypsy language, well acquainted with the gypsy character and mode of life, George Kavanagh mingled with the gypsies

as one of themselves. On Brazilian heaths, on Russian pasture-lands, on the sandy shores of Barbary, on the plains of Bohemia, in Spanish mountain-gorges, among Himalayan hill-ranges—wherever these wandering people pitched their tents, he had shared their shelter and eaten of their bread, listened to their stories and taken part in their councils. He had already published, at St. Petersburg, a collection of folk-tales and gypsy legends which had been reprinted in London, and had won some favorable notice from the English press. He was, it was rumored, collecting materials for a large work upon the varieties of gypsy dialects in use throughout the civilized world. There were other and wilder reports than these. He had been captured and sold for a slave in Moorish dominions; he had escaped, rejoined his roving friends, and been elected one of the heads of a tribe; he had been united in matrimony (after the gypsy fashion) to a tawny daughter of the Romas, who had presented him with three or four bouncing *chals* and a *chavi* or two. But of late years the tongue of rumor had been silent with regard to that eccentric vagabond, George Kavanagh.

The colonel was remarkable for no peculiarity, except that of never quarrelling with his neighbors and invariably maintaining a steady level of popularity in the county. A good-humored, pleasant-mannered, courteous English gentleman, with military uprightness in his bearing and a military simplicity in his punctual habits. Deeply tanned by burning Indian suns, prematurely gray from the effects of Indian fevers, active and vigorous still, though his sword-arm, crippled many years past by a blow from a Persian sabre in the war of 1857, hung stiff and nearly useless by his side; with a child's guileless simplicity looking out of his bright blue eyes, with a school-boy's appreciation of life in its harmless, pleasant out-of-door phases; a man whose open nature made him unconscious of the existence of the artificial quality of tact in others, and incapable of employing it for himself.

Who, in Othello's place, would have admired the strawberry handkerchief in Cassio's possession and dimly remembered having seen one like it somewhere, but have dreamed of nothing more. Who, in Lear's situation, would never have thought of putting inconvenient test-questions to his family, but would have taken their affection for granted and gone comfortably to sleep

in his easy-chair. Who liked his horses and dogs as heartily as he hated law and lawyers. A kindly, honest, commonplace, somewhat stupid English gentleman. Nothing more remarkable than that.

CHAPTER II.

THE KAVANAGHS—CONTINUED.

COLONEL KAVANAGH had married twice. His first wife had been a younger daughter of one of the greater county families, a delicate, sensitive, hysterical creature, upon whose feeble constitution the Indian climate had told with fatal effect, and who had died at an obscure hill-station in the Punjaub, a few years after her marriage, leaving the somewhat bewildered widower in sole charge of their daughter, a baby-girl of two years old. The colonel brought the child—a pale-faced, long-legged little creature, clinging to her Indian nurse, shy of her father, rejecting with positive terror all advances made by well-meaning strangers—home to his native Norfolk, and placed her in charge of his family. Then he returned to his regiment. Five years later his father and mother were dead; his young daughter required a guardian and protector; Selbrigg Hall wanted a master, and he was tired of soldiering under a scorching sun. The colonel retired from the army and came home again, this time to stop for good.

Perhaps he had not thought much about the child—his life had been a busy one; but he had kept all her letters—from the first illegible hieroglyphics to the more shapely pot-hooks and hangers, from straggling round-hand capitals to the latest school-girl scrawl—religiously in his desk, and her photograph in a camphor-wood frame, unsavory to the taste of white ants and other voracious entomological marauders, on his dressing-chest. When at last they met upon the hearth of the oak dining-room at the Hall, where, in genial recognition of the Anglo-Indian's susceptibility to chill, a bright fire crackled, though the season was September, he was almost startled by the child's unlikeness to himself and to her mother.

"Is it papa?" she said, in a small, self-possessed tone, looking

at him with wide hazel eyes, and holding out a small hand to be shaken. "You're not very like your photograph, but, of course, you must be papa?"

The colonel somewhat confusedly testified to the correctness of the conjecture. Then he hesitated. He knew he ought to embrace his daughter. Parental precedent pointed to this as the correct thing.

"Will you give me a kiss, Rosalind?" he asked, stooping down his tall grizzled head to a level with the golden-brown one.

"I suppose I ought," the child said, hesitating; "but I'm not much used to kissing people, and we're not very well acquainted, though, of course, we shall understand each other better by-and-by."

"I hope so," the colonel acquiesced.

"And then things won't seem so strange," said Rosalind. "May I ring for some tea? Grandmother always used to ask her visitors whether they would have some tea? and when they said 'No,' grandpapa used to say, 'Try something stronger!' Will you try something stronger—if you don't like tea?"

The confused colonel murmured that he would try some tea, and the tea was brought by the old butler, who looked from his master to his master's daughter and back again, and retired with faint indications carved on his wooden countenance of the first grin that had hovered there since the house became a house of mourning.

However, the Colonel's bewilderment augmented at dinner, when Rosalind presided at one end of the long table and entertained him with conversation of the kind she supposed best suited to his years and mental standing. But when the hour of bedtime came, and the long row of servants filed in, taking their accustomed places, while the small mistress of the household read family prayers out of a large book—not without stumbling over her obsolete petition for the welfare of his most sacred majesty, King George III., and his illustrious consort, Charlotte; and finally bade him good-night in the hall, accepting her bedroom candlestick from his hands with the gravity of a chate-laine of the Middle Ages receiving a gage from the hands of a trusty squire, the simple soldier retired to the smoking-room utterly confounded.

"Send for Rosalind's nurse," the voice of common-sense

prompted, and Dawes, her duties of disrobing over, was summoned. The colonel questioned her as to his daughter's habits, tastes, temper, and general character, and received the answer that Miss Rosalind was a quiet little lady who gave very little trouble. To be sure, she was what my lady had called "reserved" in her manners and particular in her notions.

"My—Miss Kavanagh had a strong affection for her grand-mamma?" the colonel supposed.

Dawes thought a moment, and said, cautiously, "Not more than common."

"For her grandpapa?" the colonel suggested, feeling his way.

Dawes shook her head and said, "Not beyond ordinary."

"For her governess, then?" the colonel said, in despair.

"She never had one," Dawes replied. "My master taught her all she knows, History and Latin, French and the Globes, astronomical and terrestium. Bless your heart!—begging your pardon, sir—she's told me about 'em till I know pretty near as much as she does."

"Does—she play much with other young people?" the perturbed colonel hesitated.

"Master Philip used to take a deal of notice of her," Dawes responded, "when him and his mother used to drive over from Lidyard Chase. But Master Philip was quite a grown-up gentleman even then compared with my young lady. And since he went abroad, she hardly ever speaks his name. She has set a good deal of store in her quiet way by her papa—begging your pardon, sir—and on his coming home again. She has led a queer sort of life for a child—begging your pardon again—though I don't doubt her grandpa and grandma knew best—" Dawes hesitated, courtesied, and sidled out of the room.

By-and-by James Kavanagh and his little daughter became more confidential, and, in course of speaking of some event that occurred in the passage home, the colonel gathered that she had never seen the sea—except in the course of a carriage drive, and at a distance. He could not be said to realize, but it just brushed his consciousness, that the nature of the child had been starved and stunted, that her life with the old people at the Hall had been a lonely one. So he issued his commands with military brevity, and a couple more days found the pair of them established in hotel apartments at a fashionable watering-place

upon the coast. She put her small hand voluntarily into his as they stood together on the sandy beach the morning after their arrival, with the waves breaking at their feet and the salt expanse of the restless ocean spread out before them. Happy bare-legged children danced upon the sands, dug pits, and reared fortifications within reach of the conquering waves, laughed, screamed, and sometimes quarrelled, as youthful Britons will.

"Would you like to play with them?" the colonel said.

She looked up at him with the great hazel eyes that were like neither his own nor her mother's, and timidly questioned "Why?" The colonel gave up the idea of solving that problem, his legitimate daughter, in despair, and sent off that very night to the office of a London newspaper the rough draft of an advertisement beginning, "Wanted, a governess for an only child. Salary no object." In the mean time he read his letters and papers on the cliffs or on the sands every morning, while Rosalind bathed under the superintendence of her nurse, or sat at his side reading some unchildish volume or other, to which access had not been denied her, or watched the pageant of watering-place life that continually passed before them. There was the retired ship-captain with his telescope, and the London draper's salesman in semi-nautical costume, and the stout lady with the white umbrella and a troop of riotous children, and the thin one with the parasol and the maid, and hosts of other types unfamiliar to the colonel from long absence, fascinating to his little daughter from their very newness.

But chief of all, and foremost in the observant interest of the child, was a pale, tall lady in black, who strolled along the cliffs every morning, or sat upon the sands, always in the same spot and always alone, as though, Rosalind fancied, she was watching the horizon for some ship that was late in coming. The child so often spoke of her, and watched for her so constantly, that Colonel Kavanagh began, half unconsciously, to watch for her too. By-and-by it was discovered that she was staying at their own hotel. That she was a widow was evident by her dress. She was a handsome woman, "and looked as if she had had her troubles," to quote Dawes.

Before the question of the governess had been settled, the colonel's problem was likely to have been settled in another way. His little daughter fell dangerously ill of diphtheria.

"It would be death to the child to remove her," the doctor said. Colonel Kavanagh silenced the protestations of the manager of the hotel by offering to rent the whole floor upon which his rooms were situated. The hotel-keeper, finding he had to do with a wealthy man, gave in with a good grace.

But there was another difficulty. It had become absolutely necessary, in view of the serious aspect which the illness had assumed, to secure the services of a properly qualified nurse. A telegram addressed to the matron of the hospital at Norwich met with a discouraging reply. There was an epidemic of fever at present in the town; the services of her whole staff of nurses were insufficient for the local need. It would be possible to procure the necessary aid from one of the great nursing institutions in London, but at least ten or twelve hours must elapse before the arrival of a skilled attendant. And in the mean time the case grew desperate—in another hour it would be absolutely necessary to perform the operation of tracheotomy. But the telegram was despatched, and the colonel, with a heavy heart, sat down and waited for the reply.

"A lady, sir, would like to speak to you."

The colonel raised his worried head from his hand, and took the card the waiter offered him, with waiterly grace, upon a dingy salver. The name upon the card was:

"MRS. SAUMEZ."

The colonel yawned drearily, and said, "Show the lady in."

The lady was shown in. The colonel had been prepared to meet an entire stranger; the colonel was relieved and surprised. It was the lady in black; the lady they had noticed walking on the cliffs or sitting on the sands; the lady in whom the sick child had manifested such an unaccountable interest; a tall, graceful woman, of nearly thirty; a woman of distinguished appearance, whose remarkable beauty was not neutralized, only somewhat sharpened, by the wasting touch of suffering, mental or physical, visible in her face. She introduced herself to the colonel with the easy grace of a well-bred woman; she gently solicited his confidence and won upon his reserve by her unaffected sympathy with him, and her unaffected sorrow for the child.

"I used to watch her upon the beach day by day," she said. "We have spoken to each other sometimes, meeting in the pas-

sages or on the stairs. I am a lonely woman, and your little daughter interested and attracted me from the first. I once knew a child who would have been about the same age, who might have been like *her*, if—" Her voice broke and faltered, her eyes turned away to hide the tears that had risen in them. Mentally the colonel supplied the missing end of the sentence. "If she had lived to grow up," and added, looking at her mourning dress, "her own child, no doubt. Poor woman!"

"I heard of your little daughter's illness for the first time to-day," the lady went on. "No need to tell you that the real nature of the complaint—being an infectious one—has been carefully concealed by the landlord from the knowledge of other visitors staying in the hotel. It doesn't matter how the news reached *me*. I heard, again, that the case is serious enough to call for an operation; that it has become necessary that the services of a professional nurse should be obtained without delay. I have had hospital experience in my time; I have nursed patients stricken with diphtheria back to life under the doctor's orders. Let me place that experience now at your disposal. Let me nurse your little girl!"

She was earnest in her offer of attendance on the child. She asked to be shown the sick-room. Colonel Kavanagh, in his irresolution, could only thank the lady, ring the bell, and ask the doctor to step down and decide for him.

The doctor came, heard the lady's story, and, being a sensible Scotchman, gratefully accepted the lady's offer. She glided away and returned in a dozen minutes, wearing the simple uniform of the sick-room. In the plain cotton gown and serviceable apron, with the little frilled cap tenderly sitting on her plentiful waves of golden-brown hair, waves streaked even in her womanly prime with gray, she looked handsomer than ever. The doctor, who had a professional eye for a fine woman, looked at her from head to foot, nodded approvingly, and grunted, "You'll do."

They went up-stairs, the colonel following. The doctor opened a door leading into the first-floor drawing-room, rented by Colonel Kavanagh. The sick-room opened out of the drawing-room. A linen sheet, dipped in some disinfecting fluid, had been hung before the door-way. The doctor pushed it aside and motioned the new nurse to enter.

She went in. The rays of the setting sun shone through the

slats of the drawn Venetian blinds. The crash of waves breaking upon the pebbles of the beach, the laughter of the children at play upon the sands, penetrated with the sunbeams into the quiet room where Rosalind lay. From the bed came a hoarse, gasping sound. Dawes stood there with a frightened face, supporting the child, whose frail, small body lay huddled limply back against her arm. The wide, bright eyes opened as the stranger drew near; something like a gleam of recognition dawned in them before they closed again. For an instant the new nurse wavered; she grew pale; she put her hand to her heart, moved by some inexplicable emotion; the next moment she moved to the bed and deftly took the place of the wearied attendant, slipping her arm under the body of the child, and raising it into an easier position. Experience, calmness, self-reliance spoke in her every gesture. As she bent her head down over the child, soothing it with gentle touches and tender words, the professional eye of the doctor seized, for the first time, upon a resemblance which was afterwards to serve many observers with food for comment. The doctor was betrayed into an unguarded exclamation, couched in the broadest of broad Scotch accents:

“My certie!” cried the doctor; “but the resemblance is juist extraordinary. They micht be muither and child!”

CHAPTER III.

HOW COLONEL KAVANAGH SOLVED THE PROBLEM.

THE operation was successfully performed. Rosalind recovered, thanks no less, as the doctor insisted, to his own skilful treatment and her own naturally healthy constitution, than the indefatigable nursing of Mrs. Saumez. The colonel's gratitude was profound. How to find the best way of expressing it without wearying its object with repetitions, became a second problem which he found as difficult to solve as the first.

His little daughter's passionate devotion to her new friend knew no bounds. She was chary of expressing it. Hers was not the demonstrative affection of ordinary childhood, but something deeper and stronger by far. Unused to tenderness, she

turned to this new warmth shed upon her as a plant reared in darkness would turn to the light of the sun. And Mrs. Saumez, on her part, manifested a no less remarkable interest in, and devotion to, the child.

Meanwhile, and before the date of the Kavanaghs' departure had been formally fixed on, answers began to arrive in shoals to the colonel's advertisement. Armies of intellectual agriculturists—with the most unimpeachable references, and the clearest possible views on the management of childhood—manœuvred before the mental eye of the perturbed colonel. There was the experienced family governess, who had taught so many young ideas to bud in her time that the majority of them had burst their sepals and left off blossoming for good; there was the inexperienced young lady, obliged for family reasons to leave home, and anxious for a trial; there was the Cambridge graduate, ready and willing for an adequate monetary return—stipend, she called it—to impart half a dozen dead languages, the rudiments of as many sciences, and the germs of all the arts to Rosalind by the most approved oral method in the shortest possible time. The writing-table at which the colonel sat was strewn with applications in the genteelest possible handwriting, couched in the most refined and elegant language. Supposing he engaged the experienced family forcer, or tried the anxious experimenter, or admitted the Cambridge crusher to the bosom of his family, and she didn't do? What then? Would he be able to muster the courage to tell her so and send her about her business? A cold perspiration broke out all over him at the bare idea. The doctor entered opportunely. Before that sagacious Scotchman the puzzled colonel laid the problem in all its knottiness. The doctor indicated his title to the possession of the national attribute by solving the problem once for all. The doctor, before the colonel could stop him, swept up the whole pile of applications in one enormous double fistful, crumpled them mercilessly together, and hurled them bodily into the yawning grate.

"Guivernesses!" cried the doctor, "to—Cupar with the guivernesses! It's no' a guiverness the lassie wants, its—"

He beckoned the colonel to the window, motioning him to keep silence. In silence the colonel looked out upon the balcony veranda that ran round the first story of the hotel. It was bright

with flowers, cosey with comfortable seats, shaded by a prettily-striped awning from the glare of the sun. The wide sea stretched beyond it, panting like some sleeping creature in the scorching heat of noon.

Mrs. Saumez sat upon a low chair before the window of Rosalind's room, holding the child upon her knees. Wearied out by the heat, to which her recent illness made her more susceptible, she had fallen asleep in the arms that supported her. The extraordinary resemblance between the downbent face of the woman and the upturned face of the sleeping child struck the colonel for the first time, and came upon the doctor with a new surprise. But he had something to say, and he said it.

"It's no' a guiverness yon lassie wants, it's a muither. It's no' a guiverness ye're wanting." He probed the puzzled colonel in the ribs with a scientific finger. He chuckled in enjoyment of his own sagacity as he said, "It's a wife!"

The colonel looked at the doctor in astonishment. The doctor softly closed the window and led him, as carefully as though he had been a patient who had just undergone a serious operation, back to his chair. The doctor placed, one by one, before him, all the necessary requisites for writing a letter; the doctor invited him, with a wave of the hand, to write one then and there. The colonel hesitated a moment, cast a glance at the fireplace snowed up with scattered applications, hesitated again, then seized the proffered pen. For the next ten minutes nothing was heard but its regular scratching over the paper and the muffled accents of the oracle dictating. The letter came to an end, the colonel signed his name with a flourish, and then fell back exhausted in his chair.

"Suppose it all comes to nothing in the end? Suppose she won't have me after all?" he feebly ejaculated. The doctor replied by clapping the letter into an envelope and presenting it before him ready for the address. The colonel addressed it to "Mrs. Saumez."

The doctor rang the bell and delivered the document to the waiter. The deed was done.

Early next morning she walked in her accustomed place reading a letter. She read it more than once before she tore it into fragments, letting them flutter from her fingers one by one into

the depths below, as she stood upon the verge of the cliff pathway, looking out to sea.

"Is this the *chance*?" she said, dreamily. "Does the new life only begin from to-day?"

As the last morsel of the torn letter dropped from her hand she spoke again.

"Happiness, peace, prosperity. All these things mine, if I only put out my hand and grasp them. What deters me? Fear of staining an honorable name by taking it upon me; of bringing across an honorable threshold memories of guilt and shame; or shadowing your young life, image of my lost angel, by association with a past like mine!"

The morning mists dispersed before a steady breeze, blowing from the south-west. The morning sun shone down in splendor upon the transfigured earth, upon the changing sea. From its nest in the clover, only a few paces away, a lark sprang up and soared away into the burning blue overhead, singing jubilantly.

"Over and done with—put away, buried and forgotten," she said. "Its grave is deep enough. Why not let the past rest?"

As she said this the colonel and his little daughter came into sight, climbing the hilly path-way hand in hand. "We have come for our answer, Rosalind and I," the colonel said.

The child ran to her and clasped her about the waist. She stooped and kissed the child!

CHAPTER IV.

TWELVE YEARS AFTER.

ON a certain fine afternoon of the month of September, in the year 1886—exactly twelve years after the events recorded in the preceding chapter—a dusty pedestrian, leaving the main highway that runs from the city of Norwich through the secondary town of Aylsham down to the coast, and striking across a healthy strip of common-land belonging to the neighboring village of Ketton Old Church, turned in at the gates of Selbrigg Hall.

The woman who had opened the gates looked after the sturdy

figure until it swung out of sight. Strangers frequently visited the Hall, which was, in a certain sober way, one of the show-places of the county, and the sight of a new face was no rare thing with her. But while she had fumbled with her clanking keys the visitor had looked about him with the air of a man renewing his acquaintance with surroundings once familiar, had glanced through the open door of the lodge into the best parlor, panelled with shining oak and adorned with various cases of birds and beasts, stuffed to the utmost pitch of unlikeness to Nature, and stopped in passing to notice and pat the blind old spaniel, who had shuffled out, contrary to his wont, to sniff about the heels of the visitor, and who responded to the greeting by barking gruffly and thumping the ground with his veteran tail. But the gentleman who had been recognized by the dog was unknown to the lodge-keeper, who had kept a mental register of the features of everybody who had passed in or out of the lodge-gates any time during the last sixteen years. She called back the dog, who was deliberately setting out with the intention of following him, and went in to her tea.

There was nothing particularly remarkable about the stranger, except the peculiarity of the contrast between his hair, which was perfectly white, and his complexion, which was sunburned to the deepest shade of copper, tawny as a well-browned meer-schaum. He was somewhat below the middle height, and of slight yet muscular build. He walked easily, and with the long, elastic step of an experienced pedestrian. He wore a shabby suit of light-gray tweed, a soft brown felt-hat of an un-English make and shape, and carried a stout stick in his hand and a knapsack strapped upon his shoulders. An artist on a sketching tour, an itinerant photographer; the agent in advance of one of the minor theatrical touring companies; a traveller in the interests of an infallible pill or a new illustrated version of the Works of William Shakespeare — the white-haired man might have been any of these things but for the color of his face.

He walked on at a round pace and with a determined air until the Hall came into sight; its gray, time-worn stone contrasting with the rich autumn hues of its surrounding woods, the emerald velvet of its exquisitely-kept lawns. Then he stopped short irresolutely, went on again, wavered and stopped once more.

He took off his hat and wiped the perspiration from his face with a gaudy handkerchief of yellow Indian silk.

"Nervous, by the Lord!" he said, with a shade of astonishment in his tone. "But who would have expected to find the old place so little changed after twenty years?" His mood altered—he struck his stick upon the ground almost fiercely. "You've only seen the outside of it yet, you fool?" he said, and tramped on.

The laurel avenue, taking a gentle curve to the left, now brought him into view of the east side of the house, the rearward portion of which looked out upon an extensive garden, inclosed by lofty walls of old-fashioned red brick. Here the eccentric stranger again came to a stand-still.

"There's the old bedroom," he broke out, pointing to a casement on the second floor. "There's the old ivy, thick and tough—almost as good as a ladder for climbing up and down, or so a harum-scarum young rascal used to think, who had a weakness for roaming the country when respectable folks were asleep in their beds. There's the window that they had to rivet iron bars across—the window of the old study, where the same young scoundrel kept his birds' eggs, and planned mischief, and got caned for not being able to cram half a dozen lines of Ovid into his addle head. What were the lines that used to bother me most of all? Something about love for the country that breeds us and brings us forth: '*Nescio qua natale solum dulcedine cunctos Ducit*—' Odd," said the strange man, with a smile, half sad, half whimsical, at his own failure to complete the quotation. "Where I blundered and broke down more than twenty-five years ago I blunder and break down to-day. '*Ducit*—'"

"'*Ducit, et immemores non sinit esse sui!*'" added a voice belonging to some unseen speaker at his left-hand.

"The devil!" ejaculated the white-haired stranger with the sunburned face, surprised into profanity.

There was a rending and crackling sound. The high hedge of laurels parted and gave way. The figure of a man—of a cripple, supported on crutches—appeared in the aperture, and swung itself nimbly out into the middle of the path-way. With a whimsical courtesy it lifted its hat and bowed to the white-haired man.

"Not the devil, my good sir," said the voice; "a much less distinguished personage, I assure you."

CHAPTER V.

MR. HOELL BRINNILOW.

THE cripple, in the act of speaking, looked at the white-haired stranger with apparent indifference, but with real keenness. The stranger returned the look deliberately.

What did he see? He saw before him the twisted and misshapen figure of a man who appeared to be some twenty-six or twenty-seven years old, but who was, in reality, over thirty. His head was deeply sunken between his shoulders; his arms, long, muscular, and powerful, seemed even more disproportionately lengthy by reason of the shortness of his neck, and the diminished and withered lower limbs that dangled from his body and trailed helplessly upon the ground as he moved upon the crutches that supported him. By some kind compensatory law of Nature, it often happens that persons crippled and deformed by accidental casualty or hereditary disease, doomed to wear upon the active mind, the stirring spirit, the eager intelligence, the clog of a feeble, lumpish body till death releases these from their sad burden—borne, God only knows how patiently and bravely!—it almost invariably happens that men and women of this sad stamp are the possessors of some advantageous personal trait, some redeeming comeliness of limb or feature, some isolated beauty which the eyes of those who love them may dwell upon, and their own harmless vanity cherish to the utmost. But this man was doomed to be even less fortunate than his brothers and sisters in misfortune. If he had been hale and sound, no woman who had once looked at him would have turned to look again; no man would have spoken of him as other than an ordinary-looking fellow. He had a bullet-head, covered with sandy hair, closely cropped, brushed, and pomatumed to the last degree of smoothness. His face, small, insignificant and boyish-looking, though marked with the lines of habitual weariness and pain, was covered with freckles as sandy as his hair. Under sandy

lashes winked his sharp little brownish eyes ; his nose was snubbed, pert, and sagacious ; he had a wide, thin-lipped mouth, with a weak little fringe of sandy mustache trying to grow long enough to hide it ; his ears were large, and his teeth, if brilliantly white, were ill-set and uneven.

And yet, commonplace as the features of the crippled gentleman undoubtedly were, he was yet an individual of remarkable appearance by reason of his dress. It was early in the afternoon, the day was warm and oppressive enough to justify the most rigid conventionalist in a cool departure from the rigid rules which govern the costume of the ordinary Englishman. They stood together, not in a fashionable London park in the height of the London season, but in the carelessly-kept avenue of an easy-going country-gentleman's estate, and yet the crippled man, despite his privileged infirmity, was attired with punctilious care, and in the very height of the prevailing mode. No tailor, not a London tailor, could have adapted the outlines of the stylish frock-coat he wore to the unfortunate inequalities of the figure it covered. His linen collar guillotined the wearer into irreproachable agonies ; his necktie boasted a blazing diamond and sapphire pin ; his snowy waistcoat, his trousers—of some light gray material, in harmony with the frock-coat—and his brilliant patent-leather boots, would have done honor to Bond Street or Pall Mall. The cambric handkerchief he flourished was heavy with scent ; the bouquet of bavardia that graced his button-hole might have been made up that morning in Covent Garden. The sinewy, freckled hands that grasped his crutches were ornamented with several costly rings ; from the slender watch-chain that modestly crossed the immaculate waistcoat dangled a pendent amulet, in the centre of which a handsome brilliant was set. And the glossy silk hat which he now replaced upon his head—with a smile in which affable condonation of the stranger's rudeness in staring, and complacent conviction of his own value as an object of contemplation were combined—crowns the description of this extraordinary individual.

"Look as much as you like," the smile said ; "you won't find anything to find fault with. If you ever saw a well-dressed man in your life, my seafaring-looking friend with the white hair, you see one now."

He drew out a dainty little Russia-leather card-case, and, with

the air of fashionable negligence that sat so strangely on him, and was so plainly put on with the fashionable clothes he wore, extracted therefrom the ordinary parallelogram of pasteboard.

"The situation requires an explanation," he said. "Permit me to make it, with the usual accompaniment. As an old friend of the family residing here, I am accustomed to make my way in or out of the grounds with little ceremony, and by various short cuts which render progression, especially in hot weather, easier and less laborious. Advancing towards the house by a path concealed in the shrubbery, I overhear a classical stranger, in a momentary difficulty (even great Homer nodded sometimes, if the ancient authorities are at all reliable), on the other side of the hedge. What is the result? I hurl myself into the breach. I supply the interesting stranger with the fag-end of a quotation, and I offer him my card."

He handed the white-haired man the card. The white-haired man took it gravely and read the name upon it aloud: "'Mr. Hoell Brinnilow.'"

"Of Ketton Manor-house," added Mr. Hoell Brinnilow. "Supposing your road to have led you through the village, Ketton Old Church, as the guide-book people call it, though from time immemorial it has been known to the inhabitants as plain Ketton, you must have passed the Manor-house. A remarkable example of mediæval domestic architecture, some people call it; a tumble-down old ghost-hutch, according to others; but the most appropriate residence imaginable for its present owner. Why? Answer: because, like himself, it leans upon crutches!" With which pleasantry, at the expense of his own affliction, Mr. Hoell Brinnilow ended, and the white-haired man, leaning on his stick, looked at him, not curiously or offensively, but more earnestly than before.

"Mr. Hoell Brinnilow, of Ketton Manor-house," he repeated. "A son of the old squire's, I suppose, Mad—?"

"'Mad Brinnilow,'" as the people hereabouts used to call him," supplied Mr. Brinnilow, without a moment's hesitation. "Quite correct. I see you are no stranger to the neighborhood, sir."

"I have been a stranger to the neighborhood," returned the other, "for years."

"Many years?" hinted Mr. Brinnilow.

"Twenty years."

"Twenty years!" repeated Mr. Hoell Brinnilow. "Many changes in the place, sir, since you were a visitor here?"

"I was born and bred here," the white-haired stranger said, looking away. "As to the changes—I don't know yet—I'm almost afraid to guess what they may be." He looked back again. "The old people—Sir and Madam, as the village people used to call them—?"

"Both dead," Hoell Brinnilow answered, not ungently.

There was a short silence before the white-haired man spoke again.

"They were old when I went away," he said to himself. "It's what might have been expected. The best of us can't last forever," he went on, looking back at Mr. Brinnilow. "But you spoke of the family living at the house. If I may be permitted to ask—I assure you in no spirit of idle curiosity—what family? Whose family? Colonel Kavanagh's family, you say? I knew a Captain Kavanagh twenty years ago. He was to have been married to a beautiful young lady—one of the Mostyns—"

"And he did marry her," returned Hoell Brinnilow. "If you were intimate with the family twenty years ago, you should know that."

"As for intimacy," returned the other, "I can't say much on that score. But one member of the family I knew well enough, perhaps to my credit, perhaps not, for he had a queer reputation in the county. He was then, as I remember him, a lad about my own age. What was his name, now? Was it George?"

"There was a son of that name," returned the other. "A wild, harum-scarum fellow, a picturesque young vagabond, as I remember him, who, about the time of his brother's marriage, ran away from home."

"A picturesque young vagabond," repeated the white-haired man, with a curious flickering smile that died out upon his keen brown face as suddenly as it had appeared. "That description would hardly be suitable to him now, whatever it might have been once. He ran away, eh? And his friends never heard of him again? Lucky for them, if he was the harum-scarum young vagabond you say he was. Lucky for them!"

"You attribute to me sentiments which I have hardly expressed," said Mr. Hoell Brinnilow, his sallow face crumpling

into a smile. "The wild younger brother of my good friend the colonel was, I have reason to believe, a high-spirited young fellow, to whom, for certain reasons, his home had become unbearable. In plain words, my dear sir, he was in love with his brother's wife, or the lady who afterwards became so."

The ruddy brown hue perceptibly faded from the stranger's face, as he repeated, earnestly, "Became so? Surely you don't mean to say that she is dead?"

"She died seventeen years ago," said Hoell Brinnilow.

The strange man lifted his hand to his head. "Died four years after her marriage with the man who loved her and whom she loved?" he whispered to himself, in broken tones. "Poor girl! poor Agnes!"

He waited a moment before addressing Hoell Brinnilow again.

"Pardon my troubling you with another question, sir," he said. "Did the colonel marry again?"

"The colonel did marry again," the other returned.

"His second wife is living?"

"His second wife is living."

"Pardon me once more," went on the white-haired man, with great anxiety, "but had the second Mrs. Kavanagh been previously married? Was she a widow?"

In almost the same words Hoell Brinnilow replied to the question.

"The second Mrs. Kavanagh had been previously married. The second Mrs. Kavanagh was a widow."

The white-haired man shifted his stick from one hand to the other and tightened the strap of his knapsack over his broad chest. "Thank you for your courtesy in wasting valuable time upon a stranger, sir," he said, lifting his hat with an un-English ceremoniousness to Hoell Brinnilow, "and good-day." He turned and strode down the avenue.

Before he had taken twenty steps in the direction of the lodge-gates, Hoell Brinnilow had performed, mentally, an operation which physically he was incapable of. He had vaulted to a conclusion, overleaping the backs of half a dozen bristling doubts in the act. As nimbly as he could lay crutches to the ground he started in pursuit of the white-haired man.

"Holloa!" he shouted. The man looked back and waved his hand. "Stop!" cried Hoell, out of breath.

The white-haired man turned and retraced his steps.

The cripple, recovering his breath with difficulty, held out his hand with a frank and cordial gesture, agreeably at variance with the fantastic politeness he had exhibited a few moments before. He showed his sharp, white teeth in a pleasant smile, and said, very distinctly, "How do you do, Mr. George Kavanagh? Welcome home!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE PRODIGAL'S RETURN.

THE white-haired man started as violently as if he had received an electric shock. For the second time his astonishment found vent in profanity.

"No you're not," said Hoell Brinnilow, contradicting the assertion of eternal unpleasantness with a humorous twinkle, "you're saved. You're saved from making a fool of yourself, my good sir. Shall I tell you what you were going to do? You were going without a word to anybody. You had made up your mind to let it be as though you never had returned. You were going to slip away as secretly as you did twenty years ago, with the secret of your name and identity still hidden snugly away in your own breast. But you couldn't hide it from me." He tapped George Kavanagh familiarly on the chest. He looked up into his face with a knowing and yet a kindly expression in his sharp little brown eyes. "You couldn't hide it from me," he repeated. His thin, sinewy fingers tightened on the lapel of George Kavanagh's coat. "Come back with me to the house," said Hoell Brinnilow, eagerly. "Come back and partake of fattened veal, you prodigal returned!"

"I doubt if I should have much appetite for that kind of fare," George Kavanagh responded. "Besides, why should I go back? There are strange faces, new voices up at the old house—far too new, far too strange for me."

"Come back," said the cripple, determinedly, not loosening his grasp upon the prodigal's breast. "You shall come back, if I have to carry you; you shall come back, if I have to shriek to the game-keeper for help, or the gardener—he's not far off—and

have you dragged to the house as a suspicious character found loitering about with an eye to the family plate."

"Come," returned the other, "I won't drive you to any desperate expedient. I'll go back with you. But in the face of such changes as I shall find up there"—he pointed to the house—"I'd as soon not. You understand. Do you wonder that I am so ignorant of things that have happened in my absence? I tell you, I haven't seen a familiar face, I haven't heard a familiar voice, I haven't communicated with a creature in whose veins runs the same blood as mine, since I went away. Six days ago the steamer that brought me from St. Petersburg landed me at Hull." He hesitated a moment, and then went on, "I hardly know why I came. Something seemed to be driving me. I wanted to look at the old place again; I wanted to be feeling the old ground under my feet as well as seeing it with my eyes. I'm a good walker—I made up my mind to tramp every mile of the way. It was night when we got into Hull—dark and raining. I went to an inn for the night." He pulled out the yellow silk handkerchief and wiped his forehead, repeating, "I went to an inn for the night. I spent a wretched night—a horrible night—at the inn!"

Mr. Hoell Brinnilow's countenance expressed a conventional concern at this piece of information. Mr. Hoell Brinnilow's agile mind jumped to the conclusion that Mr. George Kavanagh's reputation for eccentricity covered the real fact of Mr. George Kavanagh's being a little mad.

"Really!" he ejaculated, with the most delicate inflection of sympathy.

"A devil of a night!" affirmed Mr. George Kavanagh, halting a moment to strike his stick upon the ground with the gesture that seemed habitual to him. His next words were in the form of a question, irrelevant in itself, and which he abruptly addressed to his companion without looking him in the face. "Tell me," he broke out, "are you superstitious, Mr. Hoell Brinnilow? Do you believe in warnings? Have you any faith in presentiments? Does that strange faculty which the Scotch call second-sight appeal to your sense of the ridiculous, or your sense of all that is most mysterious and inexplicable in the great world men live in, and the little world in which man dwells?"

"Am I superstitious?" repeated Mr. Hoell Brinnilow. "My

dear sir, upon that point I am as great a humbug as my neighbors. When charitable ladies call upon me and solicit subscriptions to missionary funds, I contribute my half-guinea at once, for two reasons. Reason number one: that I labor under the hereditary weakness of never being able to say no to a member of the sex feminine. Reason number two: that having relieved my mahogany-colored brother of ten-and-six pennyworth of Fetishism, Tabooishness, Poojah-worship, or Jossery, I may go on bowing to the new moon; picking up cast horseshoes for luck; throwing spilled salt over my shoulder; expectorating when I meet a squinting fellow-creature; shuddering when any one brings peacock's feathers into my house; and hugging my own barbarous little weaknesses in my own uncivilized little way, in common with the rest of my neighbors."

"You acknowledge yourself to be superstitious," the other went on, resolutely ignoring the sly humor in Hoell Brinnilow's tone. "Come; you haven't answered the other part of the question. Do you believe in presentiments?"

"The present Age," Hoell Brinnilow went on, persistently maintaining his resolution of dealing with the subject only from the whimsical point of view, "while just as barbarous, as credulous and gross as any of the Ages—Gold, Silver, Brass, Iron, Pinchbeck—that have bubbled themselves away in the universal melting-pot of Time, is also an Age in which scientific humbug flourishes like the proverbial green bay-tree. The children of our nurseries are not children—not even embryo men and women—but natural philosophers, on a small scale. When *I* was a child, *I* believed that a person, who shall be nameless, but who is usually represented with horns in the closing scene of our national tragedy of Punch and Judy, disguised as a talking anaconda, climbed up a sour apple-tree in the Garden of Eden, and cajoled our universal mother, with an unripe pippin, into rendering mankind at large liable forever after to the unpleasant contingency of dissolution, and subject to the stringent necessity of sartorial embellishments. Tell a youngster of to-day that story and see what he would say to you! He didn't learn his A B C out of Mavor's spelling-book, as you and I did. He picked it out of the introduction to the Youth's Easy Primer to the Nothingness of Everything, or the first chapters of a work on the Theory of Evolution. *He* never heard any fables about gardens, or ser-

pents, or early parents in a state of innocence. He proudly points to the protoplasm as the primeval progenitor of poor humanity, and openly sneers at me for calling a ghost a ghost and not an optical delusion. Therefore, if a modern child asked me whether I believed in presentiments, I should suspect him of laying a trap for me to fall into, and reply plumply, 'Not for a second.' But I'll have more confidence in *you*. I do believe in presentiments to a certain extent. And now, why do you ask the question?"

Slowly walking up a general rise of the avenue, they had reached a point where the ground sloped gradually away beneath them, where the shrubbery grew more scantily, and the view of the Hall was uninterrupted by intervening trees. There stood the noble old building, gray and peaceful, surrounded by its spreading lawns, shaded by its magnificent beeches, flashing back the sunlight shaken from the wings of passing birds, with its many casements. And George Kavanagh raised his stick and pointed to it, looking his companion full in the face.

"Does the sky look threatening overhead? Does the landscape look dark and sombre? Does the house look as if an evil fate hung over it?" he asked.

"You're a strange fellow, on my soul," returned Hoell. "No. A thousand times, no." He lifted his hat with a slight, grave gesture, and said, "God forbid!"

"Amen!" responded George Kavanagh. Then, with a sudden startled change of tone, he cried, "Look there! Who's that?"

As they stood together, looking towards the house, the figure of a woman came out of the cool shadow of the woods upon the south-west side. She carried a sunshade and wore a plain straw garden-hat and a simply-made dress of some neutral tint, that in the blinding glare of the sunlight appeared of a much darker shade. Crossing the wide sweep of lawn in a diagonal direction, coming towards the spot where the two men stood, moving with the easy grace, the unstudied self-possession that might have been expected of the mistress of the house, a little skye-terrier barking and leaping gallantly at her side.

"Who is it?" repeated George Kavanagh, as Hoell raised his hat and flourished it gayly, with a boyish brightness breaking out over his pinched face, on the instant of seeing her, that redeemed his plainness as nothing had redeemed it before.

"Who should it be?" returned Hoell, forgetting his elaborate politeness and shaking off the hand that grasped his arm. "She sees me! She's coming this way. Good-morning! Good-morning!"

"My brother's wife, Mrs. Kavanagh?"

"Your brother's wife, Mrs. Kavanagh," returned Hoell, still intent upon the approaching lady. As he spoke the clear sky clouded over for a passing instant, and upon the bright lawn, upon the old house, a moment before basking in the sunlight, a shadow fell.

"See," said George Kavanagh, hoarsely, pointing as he spoke, "her shadow seems to blot the brightness out in an instant. This cold wind blowing on my face—I never felt it till she came and brought it with her. What does it mean? Why should the warning, if it be one, come to *me*?"

"What do you mean?" the other burst out, turning upon him furiously and striking down the pointing hand. "Are you mad enough to think that your infernal warnings and presentiments, or whatever else you choose to call them, have anything to do with *her*? Are you mad enough—?"

His voice broke and died away; his face had grown livid; he trembled and shook as he stood there, leaning on his crutches, a prey, in his weakness and deformity, to some strange and terrible emotion. George Kavanagh turned and looked at him with concern in his brown face and heartfelt apology upon his lips. But Hoell spoke first, and the excuse remained unuttered.

"You're a stranger to that lady, sir," said Hoell, holding out his thin hand. "You spoke on the impulse of the moment. You couldn't tell how sorely the association of ideas, dark, threatening, sombre—I quote your own words, sir—with that—that lady—would jar upon one who knew—and—respected her. She has been among us for twelve years, and your brother's house is the brighter—how much the brighter for her presence I leave him to tell you himself. She honors the name she bears. She's a pure, gracious, noble creature, sir, whose touch brings healing to the sick, whose voice brings comfort to the sorrowful, whose smile brings sunlight into hearts as dark and bleak and desolate as—" He stopped abruptly, and loosened his hold on George Kavanagh's sleeve, to put his hand to his own heart with a haggard expression of pain. But in another moment he had

recovered his former look of sly good-humor and his former manner of elaborately affected ease, and moved forward upon his crutches with his usual halting gait as the lady continued to draw nearer.

"Come and meet her," said Hoell Brinnilow, looking round and motioning his companion to follow him, with a quaint movement of his chin. "Come and meet her, you prodigal brother-in-law, come and meet her!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE STORY CONTINUED IN AN EXTRACT FROM GEORGE KAVANAGH'S PRIVATE JOURNAL.

"SELBRIGG HALL, NORFOLK, *September 11th.*

"I HAVE made it a practice, during a protracted term of travel and adventure, extending over a period of twenty years, to record, in a desultory way, the different impressions and ideas left upon my mind by the strange situations and positions in which I have from time to time found myself, and the difficulties and perplexities in which I have from time to time been involved, in a Private Journal, separate from and having no connection with the Journal containing the detailed narrative of my wanderings through strange lands and among strange peoples, in search of evidence upon the one great problem, to the partial elucidation of which I have given the better part of my life, and shall probably devote the remaining portion. I allude to the question of the origin of the gypsy race, the question upon which so many theories have been advanced by the scholars of our own and former times—theories conflicting, and in no case convincing, of the actual source of that strange, tawny river, which, late in the thirteenth century, rolled before the footsteps of Timour and his invading hosts, from east to west, spreading its branches over the entire area of civilized Europe, and, indeed, penetrating to the remotest corners of the habitable world.

"A man with a hobby has no mercy on his fellow-creatures. But—perhaps from the custom of association with reserved Orientals—I have acquired, in a measure, the habit of reticence upon

the subject which possesses the greatest interest for me. If it should ever be necessary for a second person to consult these pages for the purpose of reference or the purpose of information—though such a contingency is hardly likely to arise—and that person should feel any curiosity on the subject I have mentioned, he may obtain my published works (in sixteen volumes, octavo) by sending to Paris, St. Petersburg, or New York. The London publishers, after one trial, would have nothing to do with me or my hobby. Perhaps the London publishers were right.

“On the sixth of this month of September I landed from the Russian steamer *Volga* upon the passenger-quay at Hull. It was night, dark and rainy. As I stood with a fellow-passenger upon the quay, we were jostled by a gang of roughs. Despite the darkness, despite the rain, the men and lads of the neighborhood engaged in the usual Pandemonic horse-play, which has gained for the dock-yard portion of the town an unenviable reputation. As my fellow-passenger and myself, shouldering our traps, started upon the search for a decent inn in which to pass the night, we were followed and watched by several of the men who had jostled us on the quay. When we entered a decent public-house for the purpose of inquiring whether beds were to be had for the night, the men followed us in and sat down in the bar. Small things tend to make folks who have travelled in uncivilized countries suspicious. My fellow-passenger, who, I believe, was in possession of a considerable sum of money, hinted to me that he would be glad of my company. We agreed to pass the night in the same room. It was a poor place enough, with two rude wooden bedsteads in it, a chair or two, and a rickety wash-stand, but it was clean enough. We sent down for such refreshment as was to be had in the house, being unwilling to go down into the bar-parlor, double-locked the door, rendered the window-sash, by a simple contrivance, perfectly proof against any attempt to open it from the outside, and went to bed.

“I have omitted to mention my fellow-passenger's name, for the simple reason that I did not know it. He was a finely-built man, well-bred, and gentlemanly enough in manner, somewhere about my own age, but looking younger, on account of his lighter complexion and his curly red-brown hair. He looked a man whose very strength and agility should have rendered him fearless; but, to my surprise, he was, on the subject of thieves and

thieving, as nervous as an old lady or a timid young girl. He examined the fastenings of the door and window half a dozen times before he would go to bed. I believe, for all he had asked for my company, that he was terribly suspicious even of me. But, perhaps, I may be wrong.

"I lay awake long after my fellow-passenger, with all his uneasiness and distrust of his surroundings, had fallen asleep. That uncomfortable sensation, which the most accustomed travellers by sea are possessed with on setting foot on dry land after a voyage, possessed me. The room heaved up and down, and rolled, more than the steamer had seemed to do, in my imagination. But at last sleep came on me—a sleep so far different from my usual healthy sleep that it was like sleeping and waking combined. In a word, I dreamed. Yet while the dream was in progress I was so far conscious that I distrusted the reality of the vision, and was fully aware of all its fantastic incongruities.

"I dreamed first that I stood in a green church-yard looking at a grave. On the head-stone was carved the name of 'Agnes.' Even before I stooped to read the name, I knew that my brother's wife—the woman I, too, had loved in my boyish days—was dead and buried there.

"I looked up. On the other side of the grave my brother stood. He held a woman by the hand. She was dressed in black from head to foot, and wore a widow's veil under a bridal wreath that was upon her head. I tried to speak and reproach him with his want of constancy to the dead—and in the same moment they vanished, and I was left alone, standing by the lonely grave.

"I raised my head and looked out over a well-remembered country. The old Hall, with its still woods about it, its gardens basking in the sunlight, lay before me. I passed in review each point of the familiar scene. And as I gazed, the figure of the woman in widow's-weeds passed before me from left to right of the fair landscape. And where her footsteps fell darkness fell, and blotted the whole picture out.

"Then the scene changed. I was in Russia again, riding my horse over one of the great lonely grazing plains near Novogorod. The sun set as the encampment I sought rose up before me; and I uttered a wild cry, and the wild people came running out of their tents and gave me wild welcome, and I dismounted,

and they led me in; and we feasted and sat in conclave. And I thought that I told the story of my dream to the wild people, who crowded round to listen. And when I had ended, they beat their breasts, and tore their hair, and lamented in their wild way. And I said to the chief of the tribe, the old Ziganskie Ataman, 'Why do they lament?' And he answered, 'Brother, because the dream is a bad dream. Because the black-veiled bride who took the hand of my brother's brother was Sorrow, and the shadow that fell upon the house of my brother's people and swallowed it up was the shadow of shame and disaster and death!' And I shuddered and cried out, and woke, as I thought, but bathed in a cold sweat, and powerless to speak or to move a limb.

"I knew that I was lying in bed, but I thought the bed stood in my old room at home. In the midst of a confusion of strange sounds that broke out about me I distinguished the sound of hasty feet running by underneath the window; the sound of voices calling aloud; all the feet hurrying in one direction, and all the voices calling the same dreadful word over and over and over again. And this time I woke in earnest and sprang from my bed.

"The gray light of dawning filled the room. The pattering feet were still going past, underneath the window, to the accompaniment of the barking of a dog and a cracking of whips. I looked out, with the dread and terror of my dream on me, and saw a flock of sheep being driven by, on their way to the quay. I turned back to the room. My fellow-passenger lay sleeping peacefully on the rude wooden bedstead farthest from the door and nearest to the window. He lay upon his back, with one arm thrown out and drooping, and the other pillowing his head. I had seen men lying so on foreign battle-fields, shot through the heart. As I looked at him lying there in the faint light a strange fancy seized me that he was dead.

"So resistless was the feeling that it drove me to his side. I bent over him, listening for his breathing. I had to put my ear close to his lips, the beating of my own heart so deafened me. It was as might have been expected—the man was only asleep. He had tumbled into bed half dressed. His flannel shirt was open and thrown back, showing his muscular breast. A locket he wore round his neck, on a narrow leather string, attracted my

attention. It was an old-fashioned ornament of plain gold. I am not fond of spying, and I was disgusted with myself for having—half inadvertently, even to the inappreciable extent of looking at the locket—pried into my fellow-passenger's private concerns. If he had waked and seen me bending over him in the murky light of the dawn, he would have had good reason to suspect me, I thought, as I went back to bed.

“Strange enough to say, I fell asleep again the moment my head touched the pillow. Stranger still, I dreamed the whole dream over again, from the beginning to the end, just in the same way. Only my fellow-passenger now went and came in the course of the vision; stood with the veiled woman beside the grave instead of my brother, and looked at me, speaking with his own voice, out of the eyes of the old Ziganskie Attaman. And when the last part of the dream was to dream over again, *his* voice, I thought, was the loudest of all the voices that went by under the windows, calling, ‘Murder! Murder! Murder!’

“When I woke for the second time the morning was far advanced. My fellow-passenger had gone. I breakfasted, paid my reckoning, and started on my way.

“A few days later, and I was standing on the very spot where I had turned back, twenty years ago, to take my last look of the old home. A trivial accident led me into conversation with a stranger. I recognized his name when, by-and-by, he handed me his card. I remembered to have seen him, a sturdy urchin of ten, riding his little pony by the side of the stern old Squire's gray road-hack, in the old times that have gone forever. He is a cripple now, feeble and deformed, instead of an active lad; I a white-haired man, fast growing old. But he remembered me, and called me by my name when I turned to go. Nothing else would have stopped me but the sound of that familiar name. For at the news that my dream had in some sort been a prophetic one, that my brother's sweet wife was dead, and he the husband of another woman, the old strange terrors came thronging back on me, cold in the warm sunshine.

“Hoell Brinnilow persuaded me to turn back. I did at length, and accompanied him to the house. As a rise in the avenue brought it for the first time into full view, the figure of a woman became visible, coming from the plantation at the south-easterly side of the lawn straight towards us. She was plainly dressed,

she wore a straw hat, and carried a white sunshade. As her shadow fell upon the lawn, something—a chill—I don't know what—came over me. My heart for an instant stopped beating. The sickening doubts, the vague presentiments of evil that had hung about me since that night at the inn at Hull, came back again, whirling between me and my better senses like a cloud of Egyptian bats. I don't know what I said—I don't know what I did—I only know now that I shocked and wounded my companion. But he recovered himself in a moment, and stopped the half-uttered apology upon my lips with words of his own, full of considerate kindness for the man who had been guilty of so gross a breach of consideration for *him*.

“He led me forward and presented me to Mrs. Kavanagh.”

CHAPTER VIII.

EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“So strange were the sensations of the moment that I hardly can recall what passed between us. But this I know, that she was kindness itself. It was her mellow voice that roused me; the warm clasp of her firm white hand that reassured me; the cordial look of her clear, candid hazel eyes that brought me to myself again. It was she who led me in, the woman whom I had wronged before I had ever seen her, by base suspicions and unfounded prejudices. When I think of it I feel like a murderer. That word has an ugly sound and a sinister look. The same word that the voices of my dream— Blot it out!

“I have blotted it out.

“The last ugly sensation faded away with the first sight of my brother's face—the first cordial grasp of my brother's hands. We put our arms on each other's shoulders and hugged, and were not ashamed of it. Kind old James! Tough and true-hearted, sound to the core, as one of our Norfolk beeches.

“I have a niece, and her name is Rosalind. I had no idea what an agreeable thing it was to have a niece until a beautiful girl came and kissed me—a sounding, honest kiss (I felt that kiss, though my hide is as tough as saddle leather), and called

me 'Uncle George.' It would be almost worth while to settle down on the old soil for good, just to be called 'Uncle George' in a tone like that every day.

"My niece Rosalind is like her dead mother. She has her mother's sweet, bird-like voice and fair complexion, and her mother's walk, and her mother's exquisite hands and feet. But, strangely enough, there is sufficient likeness between Rosalind and her step-mother to take in people who are ignorant of the real nature of the relationship between them. It is a good, sweet, wholesome, tender thing to see those two together. I feel inclined to send out into the highways and hedges of literature and gather in, by beat of drum and thrash of cudgel, all the namby-pamby folks who write cruel step-mother stories for the magazines to benefit by the spectacle. Here's an unnatural step-mother, madam! Here's an ill-treated step-daughter, sir! And now be off with the pack of you and write bosh—diluted with twaddle—if you can!

"I have made a discovery with relation to my pretty niece Rosalind. Rosalind's stockings—Rosalind's Uncle George may mention his niece's stockings without shocking the bosh-twaddlers—Rosalind's stockings are—not exactly of a pronounced blue color—say, tinged with a delicate shade of azure and you'll hit the mark. Rosalind has received a superior education. Rosalind possesses a cultivated mind, and rubs it carefully up every morning with a pinch of science and a rag of some ology or other to keep it bright.

"My niece Rosalind tells me that the intellect of woman has made great advances in the last twenty years (she can only speak with certainty for nineteen of them—I forgot to remind her of that); and her claim to equality with man has in all respects been wholly justified. All this since I went away. When I went away the ladies—bless their hearts!—were playing at croquet, reading Tennyson and Bulwer-Lytton, and cultivating sentimentality, just as, twenty years before that time, they had been playing the harp, painting on rice-paper, reading the novels of Miss Porter or Jane Austen, and cultivating sensibility. I return to find the aspect of things completely altered. The game of lawn-tennis, a pastime involving the violent exercise of every muscle in the body, and taxing to the uttermost the staying capacities of the respiratory organs, has become the universal pas-

sion, while cricket day by day obtains an increasing number of female devotees. The novels they read are written ostensibly with a purpose, or as ostensibly without one. It is not difficult to produce a specimen of this former kind of literature, so popular at the present moment, from the simple formula which I have appended here for my own private use and information. You simply invent or borrow a story of modern life, stir in a little love lawful, and pepper with the illicit article. Then borrow one of the newest treatises upon political economy—anybody who has got one will give it you for the asking—mix together in a bag, shake well, and leave the rest to the printers and the public.

“Instead of sensibility or sentimentality, the ladies of my native country now cultivate patriotism. The female population of Great Britain is, at this moment of writing, divided into two political parties. Each is headed by its leader; each is distinguished by its favorite color, and hugs to its heart of hearts its own particular emblem.

“The enthusiasm of party number one has had the effect of turning that hardy annual known as the daffodil into a perennial, and causing it to flourish, in high Tory gardens, all the year round. The party whose chosen emblem it is bears its name. The enthusiasts, male and female, who carry its bilious blossoms in their bosoms, and wave its presentment on their banners, are distinguished by the titles of Daffodil Ladies and Daffodil Lords. And, with one or two craven exceptions, not a soul in the county but has been formally enrolled as a Daffodil Demonstrator, unless he or she happens to be a member of the Liberal Fibberation League.

“The Liberal Fibberation League exists as a rival association, carrying rival banners, wearing rival colors, holding rival opinions, and pinning rival badges on the breasts of rival members at rival meetings in the same town-hall. If a great Daffodil demonstration has been held at some Conservative member's country-seat, with bands and buns, raspberry-jam and races, cake and quadrilles, whey and waltzes, political addresses and Punch and Judy, the Liberal Fibberation League, a few days afterwards, issues manifestoes announcing an entertainment to the middle-class young of both sexes, presenting exactly the same features, down to the Punch and Judy and the political addresses, but

with radical differences, of course, as regards the politics of the latter.

“Each society disseminates its own views and propagates its own opinions, in pamphlet form, for the enlightenment of the world at large. Lady Butterworth, the most deeply dyed of all the Daffodil Ladies of the county, called upon us the other day, and selected my unworthy self, being a new-comer, as the special object of her attentions. On her going away, I found the interleaved specimen, bound in yellow, and explaining ‘How to Be a Tory on Twenty Pounds a Year,’ in my left coat-tail pocket.

“When she went away, Mrs. Dabb-Hendley, the local leader of the Liberal Fibberation League, succeeded her. *She* took me aside and was good enough to explain *her* views. She had not been gone five minutes before I found the second specimen interleaved, bound in emerald-green paper, and entitled ‘Hints on Home Rule; or, the Girls’ Own Guide to Gladstone,’ this time in my right-hand coat-tail pocket! When Lady Butterworth drops a sulphur-colored pamphlet on the track of a green one, she calls it ‘stemming the torrent.’ When Mrs. Dabb-Hendley sheds a green one to counteract the bilious-hued influences already mentioned, *she* calls it ‘scotching the snake.’ Imagine the snake being scotched and the torrent being stemmed, with more or less vigor and discretion, by the yellow or green friends and followers of these two patriotic and extraordinary women, right and left, and you will have conceived a slight but adequate idea of the effect which politics—indulged in with as little discretion as orange Pekoe—may have upon the entire feminine population of a county.

“My sister-in-law, who appears to be as sensible as well as a handsome woman, does not appear to have suffered from inoculation of any of these differently colored principles; and my niece Rosalind only whispered to me this morning that she doesn’t know the difference between a Tory and a Radical, and doesn’t care to know it! I very much doubt if the author of either the yellow pamphlet or the green could enlighten her!

“My niece Rosalind is a charming girl; and, like many other charming girls, she is perfectly aware of the fact.

“My niece Rosalind is in love, and she hasn’t the least idea of it.”

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“IN love with ‘Philip!’

“‘Philip’ is a baronet; not a very rich one; but the Lidyard estates were encumbered in his uncle’s time, and, like a prudent young man, he has been content to invest the accumulated interest of his long minority—he was turned twenty-five before he legally came of age—in putting things to rights again. I remember Sir Philip Lidyard’s mother. She used to be a handsome, yellow-haired, strapping giantess, with a loud laugh and a hearty appetite and an obstinate temper. Her son is like her in every respect but that of the appetite. Did I mention that he was in love with Rosalind? Young men who are in love don’t think much of eating in presence of the object of their affections because they are aware that after marriage they may rate her about soup, fish, entrée, or joint, at dinner seven times a week with impunity—perhaps! Never mind! I’m only a bachelor—my view of matrimony is a prejudiced view, no doubt.

“I met Sir Philip on the day of my arrival. He was sitting talking in an undertone to my niece Rosalind—why will young people have so many secrets?—on the terrace, the dear old red-flagged terrace that runs along the back of the house, where the musk-roses and jasmine twine round the cracked stone pillars, and our mother used to walk on rainy days, looking out on the drowned garden. Even in the time of snow she used to walk there. One night in Persia, when I was lying stricken with fever at a road-side khan, I dreamed I saw her, passing slowly up and down from the boudoir-windows to those of the drawing-room, from dining-room to library, and back again—all these rooms being on the ground-floor, in a line with each other, and having as nearly as possible the same outlook—as though the foe might be expected to sally from ambush in the woods and lay siege to the front door any day, and it was as well to be on the safe side.

“Philip has known Rosalind ever since she was six years old.

Rosalind has known Philip ever since he was eighteen and came home from Heidelberg—where he had been studying harmony, letting his hair grow, and learning to drink Bavarian beer—to take his proper position as the heir-expectant of a homœopathic bachelor uncle, who physicked himself out of the big globule we live in by the incessant exhibition of little ones—sugar-coated—within a year afterwards.

“So far, the path of these pretty young lovers would seem to be strewn with roses. But young people, especially high-spirited young people, don’t want things to be made too easy for them at first. *They* like alarms and excursions, feints and surprises; and to part forever, on an average, at least three times a week. *They* know that the course of true love never did run smooth, and they would be very much disappointed, on the whole, if it were to.

“‘Let go my hand, for Heaven’s sake! Papa is looking!’ or, ‘You must positively go now, and not come near me for another two days at least. Mamma is beginning to suspect something,’ etc., etc., when papa and mamma are perfectly aware of the little matter, rather pleased at it than otherwise, and quite ready to strike the conventional attitudes and discharge themselves of the conventional blessing at a moment’s notice.

“I, too, had my May-time; it was a short one. Storms swept over the smiling fields and robbed the orchards of their bridal garlands; the hawthorn blossoms wept from the hedge in pearly showers; the birds forgot that it was pairing-time and hushed their notes; or it seemed so to me. Despair breathed on the windows of my solitary chamber and frosted them with her breath, so that I only saw a wintry landscape, where to others Spring reigned and rioted over the goodly earth.

“Ah! the old associations, the old memories, the old scenes, as they spring up and twine round me closer day by day; no wonder if the wild, roving instincts, the sturdy love of freedom and change are being choked out in their embrace. Of old, I felt my individuality perishing in this environment of use and custom and familiar habit—I felt smothered under it as a young tree must feel when the close-clinging mantle of the wood-ivy wraps it round, and the honeysuckle and the wild hops have clasped their fetters upon its branches. But, after all, the vagabond in me is not dead but sleeping, and some fine day he will wake and shake himself, strap the old brown-leather knapsack

on his back, and take his staff from its dusty corner, and start upon the tramp again. But when I speak of this day, they—all of them, down to Philip, of whom I am jealous—raise an outcry. My niece Rosalind and her mother have forbidden me to mention the subject again under threat of penalties unspecified, but understood in a vague way to be grim and dire. These two gentlewomen are autocrats, and use their power mercilessly. My brother James, who had the reputation in military circles of being a martinet, is, I should say, the best bullied man in Europe at this moment. Nominally, he is master in his own house, but in reality his rule does not extend one inch beyond the walls of the carpetless dressing-room, where his little iron camp-bedstead stands, and his big bath yawns for him, and his old fatigue-caps and swords hang upon the walls, round which his twenty-four pairs of boots are mustered in orderly rank and file. The best bullied man in Europe, did I say? Perhaps the happiest and best contented, after all. But if no earthly persuasion may induce the kind people of this dear old house to hear of any limit being set to my stay, I myself have drawn the Rubicon beyond which not one hour's delay is allowable. And that limit will be found at the bottom of the last blank page in this book—and the book is not a large one. The last line written, the last 'i' dotted, the last 't' crossed, back goes Vagabond George to the old wild life, the old wild companions, with a volume of gentle thoughts and kind remembrances to keep him company!

"But I have strayed away from Rosalind to generalize.

"I have said that Rosalind is in love. How did I come to guess first at the truth? Upon a certain day, when it was proposed that, under Rosalind's guidance, I should go over the old house and renew my acquaintance with it, corridor by corridor, chamber by chamber.

"The main body of the house had been explored; the east wing, in which are the kitchen offices, and the servants' rooms, presented nothing of interest. The west wing remained. It is now little used, being the coldest and most draughty, as well as the oldest portion of the house. A dismantled ball-room or reception-chamber occupies nearly the whole of the second floor. Decorated in fresco by some dead and gone artist, in the depraved classical taste of the Jacobean Period, it may once, when

its colors were bright and its gilding untarnished, have presented a cheerful spectacle. But now, with its moulting Cupids, faded and time-discolored garlands, and flagrant mythological indecencies, from whose riotous limbs the plaster has dropped away in scales—imparting to them a leprous appearance loathly in the extreme, it is the last place on earth in which a merrymaking of any sort might be held—except, indeed, a dance of ghouls.

“But beyond the ball-room, raised above the level of its dusty floor by a short flight of three oaken steps, is the old music-room, lighted from the north by a noble window of stained glass. Here all sorts of antique and forgotten instruments are falling, one by one, into a soundless decay. There are the virginals upon which Queen Elizabeth is said to have played a tune with the royal fingers that were apt to play other tunes, in stormy seasons, about the ears of royal favorites. There are clavichords and viols, with necks of monstrous length and unwieldy bows, queerly inlaid and ornamented with mother-of-pearl and foreign woods. Beside an old spinet—the dusty grave of many a forgotten melody—stands my mother’s harp, swathed in its green-baize bag, which the moths have eaten into holes; the flute I used to get such desolate wailings out of when I was a lad, lies yet upon the dusty window-sill, and the old school-room piano upon which I used to practise my scales—much to James’ disgust—has been banished up here, and is now ending its days peaceably in a sunny corner. But a grizzly erection, bristling with pipes and pedals and handles—gilt knobs such as you see upon the drawers in chemists’ shops—now encroached its ungainly bulk upon the wide fireplace, and lumbered—not soared—towards the ceiling; I had never seen this before, and said so. It is, in fact, an organ, invented and perpetrated by Philip during a brief mechanical craze, which overtook him in the early part of his career, before—his elder brother being then living—he was permitted to indulge his musical propensities by going to Heidelberg to study, and was consequently presented by him to Rosalind.

“Metal does not enter into the composition of this instrument. It is made entirely of turned wood and leather. Of all the quaint instruments in that room—and there are many—that organ is the most obsolete and absurd. Indeed, it partakes more of the character of an edifice than an instrument, so much solid

material has gone into the making of it. It is dark, ponderous, frowning. It might be a novel kind of rack used at some period of the Middle Ages. It is capable of a surprising amount of torture to-day, though it is in a crazy condition from dry-rot, and partially paralyzed from long disuse.

“‘It is Philip’s organ,’ said Rosalind, and sat down on the uncomfortable little bench and laid her white hands upon the yellow keys, as if they had been old friends. Philip, who had drifted into the room in my niece’s wake, instantly sat down and prepared to listen to the strains that should be evoked by his mistress from the instrument created by his hands, while I, like a dutiful uncle, blew the bellows.

“The strains came. As a rule—I’m not an organist myself and I may be wrong—the largest pipes produce the lowest sounds, and the thinnest pipes the shrillest. Nothing of the kind with Philip’s organ! It bellowed where it should have sighed, it was gruff where it ought to have been tender. The treble register roared and thundered like a foundery in full blast, the bass notes twittered and chirped like a nest of sparrows. It had dropped the middle register out of the key-board, like a tooth. Was ever such an unconscionable old organ?

“‘My dear,’ I said to my niece Rosalind, when the mediæval captive had breathed his last and all was peace again; ‘that is a very extraordinary instrument!’

“‘Philip made it,’ said Rosalind, defiantly, as if it must be perfection on that absurd account. She looked at Philip. He was sitting on the broad window-seat where I used sit when I was a boy.

“His elbow leaned upon the sill. He rested his head upon his hand and stared absently at the floor, which the morning sunshine had diapered with crimson and purple from the stained quarrels overhead. Perhaps he was pondering on the theory of the eternity of sound, and wondering if such tones as he had made that instrument liable to produce were likely to go on through space for uncounted cycles to come! Or perhaps he was thinking about Rosalind!

“I saw *her* eyes settle and rest on *him*, sitting unconscious there, as the eyes of a loving woman look upon the man of her heart. I saw a lovely flush rise in her cheeks and dye her sweet white throat into crimson, like the color on the side of a sun-

bitten peach. I saw her bosom rise and fall to the time of her quickened breathing as his eyes lifted and met her own and told their secret tenderly to her.

“What did I do?”

“I did a thing which should bring upon me the condemnation of every well-regulated person: I remembered that *I* had been young once—I went away and left them together.”

CHAPTER X.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“I FOUND Mrs. Kavanagh in the garden. Hoell Brinnilow was with her. She was cutting roses, the hardy yellow roses that blow late and linger on till the November frosts. Hoell held her basket; on his face was the pleased, bright, almost boyish expression that softens the lines of pain and discontent, and alters it so agreeably when he is in her company or within sight of her and sound of her voice.

“He leads a retired life up at his old ‘ghost-hutch,’ as he humorously terms the Manor-house. But for his extraordinary taste for, and indulgence in dress, one might say, a hermit-like life. At first sight I was hardly disposed to like Hoell Brinnilow, but I confess he has gained upon me since. I fancy that I can discern in that strange mixture of contradictions, elements of tenderness, nobility, and self-devotion. Even what I was harshly disposed to condemn as flippant trifling with the gravity of his own affliction now presents itself to me in another light—the light of a courageous determination to make the best of life as a bad job; to yield to no temptation to relapse into sour moroseness or sullen despair, but to keep, as far as possible, a sturdy heart in a frail, stricken body, to the end.

“I see him in this altered aspect now; thanks to Mrs. Kavanagh, who first opened my eyes, who first showed me the true nature of the man.

“‘Where is Rosalind?’ she asked, as I joined them. (Rosalind always before everything, with this anomalous step-mother.)

" 'In the music-room,' I answered, dexterously avoiding any reference to Sir Philip in my reply.

" My sister-in-law looked at me. I returned the look with as much unconsciousness as I could muster.

" 'Alone?' she questioned.

" I believed not; I believed that Sir Philip Lidyard—

" Mrs. Kavanagh's serene brow became a little ruffled.

" 'It is damp up there,' she said, anxiously; 'damp and cold, even in this warm weather.'

" She moved from us towards the house.

" 'Let me go!' insisted Hoell Brinnilow, divining her unexpressed intention in a minute. 'Let *me* go and bring Rosalind down out of the damp and the cold.'

" 'No, no!' I said, shocked at the idea of letting him undertake an errand which might involve exertion or even pain. 'Let me go.'

" Hoell turned upon me quite angrily.

" 'Are you the tame cat of this establishment,' he demanded, 'or am I?'

" 'Hoell, Hoell,' remonstrated Mrs. Kavanagh, touching him lightly on the arm.

" Hoell became good-tempered on the instant.

" 'It's a characteristic of the true-born Briton to resent interference with his privileges,' he said, 'whether his privileges consist in catching the small-pox, getting drunk on Sunday, taking a muddy foot-path through somebody's private grounds instead of the high-road, or in wearing yellow or green, as the case may be. I'm a true-born Briton in that I stick to my privileges like grim death or glue; and in this house I'm the privileged person who fetches and carries, comes and goes, does this, that, and t'other for the ladies. I wind their crewels; they've taught me to embroider nearly as well as they do themselves. *I* bud their roses and doctor their over-fed lap-dogs and plethoric cats. *I* teach their parrots to talk without swearing, and their bullfinches to whistle tunes. I'm not, like *you*, an honored guest in this house. I'm an institution—a crazy one, like most of the other institutions in the country. And I'm going to fetch Rosalind down out of the damp.'

" He limped away as gallantly as if he had had the best legs in England. In resentment of my implied slight upon his pow-

ers, he even swung himself over the low balustrade that runs round the terrace, instead of walking up the path to the glass door. As he gained the threshold he turned and waved his hat triumphantly to Mrs. Kavanagh, defiantly to me. He vanished then. Thump, thump! We could hear his crutches pounding up the hall. Then a pause. He was resting, once out of sight; stopping to gain breath before attempting to scale the staircase that led to the western wing.

"Mrs. Kavanagh turned to me, smiling, but with tears rising in her eyes.

" 'He is so sensitive on the subject of his infirmity that he cannot bear to be reminded, even in kindness, that the things other people do so easily are trouble and even pain to him,' she said. 'Nothing pleases him so much as being appealed to for advice, asked for help in little matters, as if his body were as strong as his heart is kind and honest. Poor fellow!'

" 'He has much to bear,' I answered.

" 'And he bears it bravely,' she returned, 'uncomplainingly, nobly, patiently. He might so easily have become bitter and morose; he might so easily have yielded to despair. But you will see by-and-by, if you have not seen already, all his satire is upon the surface, all his faults are uppermost; the true, generous nature, the real, sterling qualities lie deeper down. Ask the poor laboring people in the village what they think of their lame Squire? They will tell you that he is their best friend, in spite of his sharp tongue and his odd ways; ask your brother James what he thinks of his old companion; ask Rosalind how much regard she has for her old playfellow, and hear what both of them will say; and then come and ask me what *I* think of Hoell Brinnilow.'

" 'You are his best champion,' I said.

" 'I know his story,' she returned. 'I know how much he has suffered and how much he suffers still.' She stopped and sighed, 'Poor Hoell!'

" 'I remember him,' I told her. 'Nearly twenty years ago I used to see him riding his little pony about the roads and lanes alone, or beside the old Squire on his bony gray. A sturdy, healthy-looking little fellow he was in those days, as far as looks went. No sign of inherited weakness or latent disease about him *then*.'

“ ‘Hoell Brinnilow’s infirmity arises from no inherited disease,’ returned Mrs. Kavanagh. ‘He was, at ten years old, the healthy, sturdy child that you describe, if a neglected one. His mother died in giving him birth. I wish, for his sake, she had lived.’

“ ‘The deformity, then, is the result of an accident?’ I interrogated.

“ ‘The result of a terrible accident,’ returned Mrs. Kavanagh, ‘which happened some few years later, when Hoell was a boy of fourteen, and a pupil at one of the great English public schools—the school at which Sir Philip Lidyard was educated. It was from Philip that I first heard the story. Hoell shrinks from speaking of it, as it is easy to imagine that so sensitive a nature would. It is a sad story.’

“ ‘If no breach of confidence is entailed in telling the story,’ I said, ‘I should like to hear it.’

“ ‘In a few words she told me the story :

“ ‘The great public school of Burnham Green has sent out many celebrated men into the world,’ she said. ‘Some of our greatest scholars were educated there. Several of our greatest statesmen look back with pride and pleasure to the days when they were boys at Burnham Green.

“ ‘Every old established foundation of the sort has its traditional customs,’ she went on ; ‘some bad, some good. You were once a boy at school. Perhaps you have had some experience of the custom or the practice—whichever term is the most appropriate—of fagging?’

“ ‘I answered her boldly enough :

“ ‘I have some experience of that custom, gained during a single term spent at a public school, and it is a custom base and debasing—degrading to those who exercise it and to those upon whom it is exercised. That is all I have to say upon the subject of fagging.’

“ ‘Hoell, in common with all the other boys of his lower form, was fag to a bigger boy,’ she went on. ‘He was a delicate lad, though a healthy one. He had been brought up not over tenderly, perhaps, but as a gentleman’s son usually is brought up at home. Here at school he had to cook and sweep, run errands and black boots. He had to submit to ill-usage, insult, positive torture from the bigger and stronger boys, who were—according

to the unwritten laws of the public school—his brutal masters; from one in particular, a strong muscular boy—a splendid fellow, and capable of wonders—according to Philip, whose hero he was, and who to this day maintains his friendship for him. Philip and Hoell both fagged for the same master; and while Philip was treated with comparative consideration and comparative kindness, Hoell was the victim of every petty insult, every brutal outrage, that the brain of his tyrant could devise, or the superior strength of his tyrant could execute.’

“She stopped.

“‘I know—I know,’ I said, for her indignation had infected *me*, and memories of by-gone blows and indignities were beginning to rankle as bitterly as they did thirty years ago. ‘Pray go on.’

“‘There is not much more to say,’ Mrs. Kavanagh continued. ‘But the accident—if one can call it an accident that made Hoell a cripple for life—happened in the gymnasium. It was a wet day. Some of the sixth-form boys were gathered there, amusing themselves by emulating each other’s feats of skill or betting on them. Smaller boys gathered round admiring the cleverness of their superiors and masters, and wishing for the time when they, too, might be able to smoke and drink, and bet and swear, and risk breaking their necks with impunity—like them. Philip was there. Hoell was there. The latter was seen, and sent to fetch something in a bottle—prohibited liquor, I suppose—for his tyrant. He slipped, broke the bottle, and spilled the drink on his hurried way back; and for punishment he was ordered to climb the high trapeze to essay the same difficult athletic feat, in the execution of which his master most excelled, and which his master had triumphantly performed, amid the applause of the other boys, a few minutes before.’”

“‘He did not dare to refuse, of course,’ I said. ‘And he tried to do it and fell. I see. An ugly tumble on the mattress, at the best.’

“‘He tried to do it, lost nerve, grew giddy, and fell, as you have guessed,’ she responded. ‘But there was no mattress underneath to break his fall. As he lost hold—before his eyes closed and he swung off—he saw and heard his tormentor, with an oath, kick the mattress away. The next thing he remembered was waking up in bed at the school hospital. He lay there, I don’t know for

how long, between life and death. Then the doctors came and broke the news to him : that he might, with care and in time, be able to rise from that bed ; but that he must be a cripple all his life, until the time came for lying down in the last resting-place of all.'

" 'And the boy who did it?'

" 'The case was too flagrant to be ignored by the authorities,' she returned ; 'he was expelled from the school. Then Hoell came home—came back, I should say—to a den of riot, disorder, and worse. The old Squire's grief revenged itself on the innocent cause of it. There was only one honest hand to help the helpless boy, there was only one honest heart—honest in its regard and tenderness to him—to turn to in the place : a rough woman, a semi-wild creature, a cast-off plaything of the squire's ; she devoted herself to Hoell. The Squire is dead ; his excesses have made ruinous inroads upon his property—inroads which have impoverished the son. But as long as Hoell has a roof over his head, that faithful creature will share it. Ah ! if I have made you do Hoell the justice you denied him in your heart of hearts half an hour ago, my story has not been told for nothing.'

"I took her hand and put it to my lips as she stood there in her calm, matronly beauty, with the sunlight resting on her white brow, and in her clear, earnest eyes, and touching the folds of her softly-falling draperies, pleading Hoell's cause. I felt, at the moment, as if I would willingly have changed places with him, only to know myself the object of a regard so sisterly, pure, and tender.

" 'Remember, now, when you are inclined to judge Hoell harshly, his blighted life, his withered hopes, the desolate house that might have been a happy home and is such a lonely one,' she said. 'Think what he is, compared with what he might have been. Compare the old trite saying, so common on the lips of those who have never known what it is to suffer, that suffering purifies and chastens our human nature into something higher and better than itself ; compare it with your actual experience. Did the lightning stroke of grief, when it fell upon *your* soul and branded it, leave *you* a wiser and better man ? Did the tempests of despair that beat upon you, in some desolate God-abandoned hour that you have known, leave you fortified and strengthened or level with the dust ? Ready, like other hapless

victims of circumstances—hard, inexorable, merciless circumstances—to yield to the next desperate temptation that came your way, or to resist and overcome it?

“She stopped abruptly, as Hoell emerged from the house, breathless and exhausted, but zealous and unflagging as ever, with Rosalind, a flushed and laughing captive, on his arm.

“But before they approached within hearing, I uttered a question that had been checked upon my lips at the outset of Mrs. Kavanagh’s story. I don’t know why I asked it.

“‘What was the name of the boy whose brutal act brought life-long suffering on his victim and well-merited punishment on himself? What was the name of the boy who was expelled from Burnham Green?’

“She answered, ‘Reginald Hawley.’”

CHAPTER XI.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“September 15th.

“LAST night was the first wakeful night I have spent within these familiar walls since my return. I rose at an abnormal hour in the morning. I dressed, and lighted the old brier-root—my faithful companion for years past in many a wild wandering, in many a sore strait—and resolved to clear the cobwebs out of my brain by a cool morning walk. Nobody was stirring. I made my way out noiselessly by way of the dining-room window, crossed the terrace and the garden, and emerged into the stable-yard through a side door.

“Nobody met me except the head-groom, who was returning from a party held at the house of a friend in the village. They had given him something for supper which had disagreed with him, and in consequence he had been obliged to stop out all night—that is, he would have tendered that explanation had circumstances allowed of his expressing himself, except by onomatopœia.

“I said, ‘All right, William; I won’t tell your master!’ and went on. I passed through a wicket, under a crumbly brick arch,

and found myself in the kitchen-garden. A row of espalier apple-trees screened the path and prevented my seeing who the persons were, but the voices of a man and woman reached me. They were quarrelling. The voice of the man told me nothing but that he was probably one of the under-gardeners, and that he was rating the woman for having trespassed on his domain. The accents of the woman were completely strange to me. I stepped round the corner of the leafy screen, and came in sight of the belligerents.

"The under-gardener, a tow-haired, chuckle-headed young giant, in a long-sleeved fustian waistcoat and corduroys, knuckled his forehead and began to explain his grievance.

"Directly he appealed to me, the woman, who had been standing with her back to the espaliers, and had not noticed my approach, turned and confronted me. Decently dressed in check print, with a black-silk apron showing beneath the folds of her quiet-colored, old-fashioned merino shawl; with a neat straw-bonnet resting on her black hair, slightly streaked with gray, she presented the appearance of a respectable upper servant. Nothing remarkable about the woman so far.

"But as she stared at me, insolently enough, recognizing in me no claim to her respect or subservience, I recognized something in *her* that almost startled me into an unguarded expression of surprise. A cast of countenance, a type of character bearing in a subtle and strange degree the stamp of a strange and subtle race.

"Gypsy blood ran in the woman's veins, and lent to her skin its dusky opaqueness. The semi-Oriental curve of the gypsy profile distinguished hers; hers also the dusky, purplish tint of lip and inner nostril; hers the shallow, glittering, inscrutable gypsy stare. As she looked at me, I looked at her, in silent wonder, while the under-gardener's aggrieved references to his trampled parsnips and damaged asparagus glided past my unhearing ears in a feeble trickle of sound.

"The woman waited imperturbably till he had stopped, and then addressed herself to him, still returning my gaze with a broad stare of defiance.

"'Have you said all you want to say, Joel Thatcher?'

"'Hardla yit,' returned the under-gardener; 'hardla yit, Missis Weather.'

“‘Then finish and be quick about it,’ the woman responded, folding her shawl about her. ‘My master will be wanting me to dress him; my master will be calling for his cup of tea in another twenty minutes. Do you think I am likely to keep my master waiting for you?’ She had turned her eyes from me for a moment; she now turned them back, and addressed me. ‘I walked over to the dairy this morning, sir, to order some eggs and some butter. We don’t keep fowls, or churn at my master’s place. The garden-gate was open. I took the short cut through the garden.’ She pointed to the farther wicket-gate, opposing the one by which I had entered from the stable-yard. ‘I have been accustomed to use the short cut, sir,’ she went on, ‘and to come and go about the place as I choose, for more years than I should like to count. And this young man, who is new to the situation, interfered with me, and threatened me to-day. I should advise the young man to appeal to his betters before he takes the law into his own hands next time.’

“‘My orders,’ said the under-gardener, stolidly, ‘is “No Trespasses Allowed.”’ He wrote the words upon the air with a stubby forefinger, and made an invisible flourish underneath them. ‘And new to th’ place or old to th’ place, all I want to know is, whatn’ yow got under yow’re shaal?’

“The woman laughed contemptuously and tightened her shawl about her.

“‘Whatn’ yow got under yow’re shaal?’ pursued the relentless under-gardener, as stolidly as before. ‘Show th’ gantlemun, if you woynt show me!’

“‘Weeds,’ returned the woman, ‘worthless weeds!’

“‘All raight,’ nodded the gardener, ‘show us th’ waades.’

“His slow obstinacy seemed to goad the woman’s slumbering temper into fury. She whipped a handful of something green from under her shawl and shook it in his face.

“‘Look at them, then!’ she said. ‘Look at the precious plants stolen from your master’s garden! I wish, for your sake, I had left them growing where I found them. I wish—’ She stopped abruptly. ‘Are you satisfied now?’ she demanded. ‘Are they weeds or are they not?’

“‘They be waades!’ acknowledged the defeated gardener, scratching his chin.

“The woman tossed her head with unutterable scorn of his

stupidity, and folded her shawl tightly around her again, without throwing the weeds away. I had seen such weeds before, and in hands as lean and brown and supple as the hands that held these. And I knew the uses to which such hands had put them from time immemorial—aye, and would put them, in vengeful times to come. And on the irresistible impulse of the moment, I spoke to the woman I knew to be of gypsy race, in the language of the gypsies, saying:

“‘Koshto divvus, Rommany Chi! * What are you going to do with that?’

“The woman started perceptibly. A greenish pallor crept over her olive-brown cheeks. Her eyes shot a sudden look at me from between their narrowed lids, a look of anger and suspicion and hatred, all in one. The next moment she had recovered her composure, and faced me as coolly, as insolently as ever, while the gardener gaped in astonishment at the unfamiliar sound of a language he had, most likely, never heard before.

“‘What are you going to do with that?’ I repeated.

“‘Does the gentleman speak to me?’ she returned. ‘I don’t understand what the gentleman says. I’m sometimes taken for a foreigner, being dark complexioned. But I’m no foreigner for all that. And any language but the English language sounds strange and outlandish to me.’

“She had roused my obstinacy, with the aggravation of her look and the insolence of her manner, as she had roused the gardener’s.

“‘The people who speak the language I spoke to you just now,’ I said, ‘gather weeds like those and use them. They use them for drabbing bawlor,† and sometimes for drabbing other things besides. Do you know what drabbing bawlor means, mistress, in the English language?’

“‘No,’ returned the woman. She looked past me at the gaping gardener. ‘You know my name, Joel Thatcher,’ she said. ‘Tell the gentleman my name, and what I am, and where I live. He doesn’t believe me when I tell him I’m not a foreigner.’ She dropped a quick courtesy, and walked rapidly away towards the farther gate.

“‘It’s Mrs. Weather, Squire Brinnilow’s housekeeper, sir,’

* Daughter of Rome, good-day to you!

† Poisoning swine.

spoke up the gardener, obediently, as Mrs. Weather reached the gate and went out of it, closing it behind her, 'and she's a queer one.'

"He knuckled his forehead and shouldered his hoe and slouched heavily away. I don't know what prompted me to the action. I walked to the gate, and looked after the woman. She had crossed the wire-fenced paddock that lies beyond, and, as I looked, struck into the plantation by a path that I knew to bend into a right-of-way running across the park, and leading out through the upper gate upon the village green of Ketton Old Church.

"I yielded to another impulse, as inexplicable as the first, and followed the woman. She never looked back, but walked on steadily. I traversed the plantation and crossed the park, keeping her in sight all the time. I passed the gates, and came out upon the village green, where the village children were playing or dawdling about, waiting for the opening of the village school—a red-brick building, nestling in the shadow of the old flint-built church, with its massive square tower—the old church, in fact, that gives the village its name. On the other side of the green, beyond the white strip of high-road, high hedges of close-clipped yew enclose the garden of the Manor-house—a gabled old building of two stories in height, whose sunken roof-ridges and bulging walls are smothered under a glorious tangle of passion-vine, variegated ivy, and Virginia-creeper. 'A house on crutches,' as its master says, propped up on the side that looks towards the high-road by great, slanting wooden beams, whose naked ugliness is hidden at this season of the year under a garlanding of autumn-tinted leaves and lingering blossoms.

"I went in at the gate, under a green arch, and through a quaint wilderness of old-fashioned garden, and rang at the front door. It was opened by an elderly man-servant in a green-baize apron and a long-sleeved livery waistcoat.

"'Is your master at home?' I asked.

"The butler stared, and I began to remember, as the church clock struck nine, what an inappropriate hour I had chosen for a visit to an invalid.

"But before I had time to frame an excuse sufficient for the covering of my retreat, or the butler to reply to my inquiry, a distant door banged noisily open, and the voice of Hoell answered for Hoell's self.

“‘Of course he is at home,’ it proclaimed, ‘and delighted to see you, my dear fellow! Pray walk in! Jarvis, you ancient idiot, why don’t you ask the gentleman to walk in? You have come to breakfast? Don’t tell me you haven’t come to breakfast! Jarvis, show Mr. Kavanagh into the library, and give him an arm-chair, or a cigar and a newspaper, or anything else he wants, and tell the cook to send up everything she has in the house for breakfast. With you directly, my dear fellow—with you directly!’

“The distant door banged to. Resistance was useless—as the abducting brigand says to the fainting lady in the stock drama. I followed the butler through a wide, low hall, with a heavily-moulded plaster ceiling and panelled walls, against the dark, shining background of which trophies of Oriental arms and several fine sets of antlers show to advantage, and entered the library.

“It runs the whole length of the house, from back to front. Modern French windows, opening on the lawn at the rear, have been substituted for the old-fashioned casements which still illumine the upper end. The costly books upon the shelves, the pictures on the walls, the marble and metal reproductions of celebrated works of sculpture, modern and antique, which stand upon the brackets, are nearly all unique—all rare and valuable in their way. Hoell’s writing-table is a marvel of expensive convenience; Hoell’s sliding easel a triumph of artistic elegance; Hoell’s wheeled, stuffed, and padded chairs invite to luxurious repose; the newest reviews and periodicals testify to Hoell’s literary tastes; Hoell’s microscope and miniature photographic camera bear witness to his scientific ones. The table was already laid for breakfast, with a handsome show of snowy linen and massive old silver. Looking about me, I admired the conveniences and comforts of this snug bachelor nest, and was half-way towards envying the owner of it, when Hoell came halting in, and slapped me boisterously on the back. He wore an outrageously braided, bright-blue velvet smoking-suit, and an extravagantly embroidered smoking-cap. He was as jewelled, as scented, as pomatumed as ever, and, by contrast with the macaw-like brilliancy of his costume, seemed, if possible, more wizened and more lean. But he welcomed me a second time with great heartiness, and slapped me on the back again as

he rang the bell for breakfast, with the airy hospitality of a Barmecide.

"The breakfast appeared, and on the heels of the old manservant, who carried the tray, appeared the woman I had seen and spoken to that morning in the garden. She made no sign of recognition. She moved with the quick noiselessness born of old servitude and long custom into the place before the tray, and began to pour out coffee.

" 'This is my house-keeper, Mrs. Weather,' Hoell said, limping to the table with his usual gait. Mrs. Weather acknowledged the introduction to her master's guest by putting down the coffee-pot and courtesying stiffly, but respectfully. Seen now without the shawl, the folds of which had lent fulness to her figure, wearing a demure white cap instead of a bonnet, the slight color born of exercise now faded from her dark cheeks, she was thinner, grayer, and older than I had at first supposed. And there was no insolence now in her regard. A gleam of suspicion, distrust, or dislike—one of the three—in the strange black eyes that glanced at me for an instant and then turned away, but no defiance. She wheeled Hoell's chair to the table; she handed the coffee, and glanced at her master with the mute inquiry whether anything more was wanted. Hoell shook his head and flourished his hand, with his napkin in it, towards the door, and in doing so dropped the napkin. The house-keeper returned and picked it up, gave it into his hand with a subdued, officious eagerness curious to see, and turned to go once more. At the very threshold her quick observation showed her that the light from the nearer window fell with glaring brightness upon Hoell's face. She noiselessly returned and adjusted the blind, and then as noiselessly left the room. I followed her with my eyes. Hoell noticed the look, and put his own interpretation on it in a moment. 'You're thinking that for a bachelor's house-keeper my house-keeper is an infernally old and ugly one,' he said, with that mood and tone upon him which always repels one, seeming, as it does, an injustice to his better self. 'And you're right; she *is* old, she *is* ugly. But granting that anything young and pretty would be a more agreeable object of contemplation, anything Y. and P. has a confounded habit of presuming upon those qualities, of thinking more of her cap-ribbons than her employer's comforts; of looking in the

glass when she ought to be looking after her work, and of chipping his china while she contemplates the ultimate possibility of becoming his bride. While Mistress Endor yonder—'

" 'Mistress Endor?'

" 'Merely a nickname I call her by when it's my whim to be teasing,' responded Hoell, wrinkling his sallow little face into a grin. 'The country people call her a witch, in virtue of the contrast between her brown skin and black hair and their own tow-heads and raw-beefsteak complexions. I throw it in her teeth when I want to put her into one of her rages. She has a temper of her own, has Mistress Endor, but she's a faithful creature—a faithful creature. My nurse when I was a boy, my house-keeper now. My nurse, too, occasionally; for, like other robust and healthy mortals, I must own to being occasionally out of sorts.'

" He stretched his arm out to me across the table, pulling up his velvet sleeve and unbuttoning the cuff of his gaudy silk shirt to exhibit its anatomy to greater advantage.

" 'Talking of robustness, look at that,' he cried. 'There's pith and sinew! There's a muscular development! As a judge of that sort of thing, my dear Kavanagh, I ask your opinion of that limb.'

" I looked at the limb. I said, as candidly as I could, that I had never seen anything like it before. Hoell nodded his sandy little head triumphantly as he pulled down his sleeve. He was in radiant good spirits for the remainder of my stay. He pressed me with assiduous hospitality to eat of every dish upon the table. He referred me to the early Briton and the gladiator of ancient Rome, and to the heroes of the modern prize-ring, to demonstrate that the best possible breakfast for a man who had his muscular development at heart was a breakfast of raw beefsteaks and malt liquor, while making his own in a sparing and bird-like fashion of coffee and dry toast.

" He took me round the house and garden before I left. In the latter he has had a little observatory built, and a miniature equatorial erected, though the telescope points steadfastly over the tops of the intervening trees to the Hall, as though, except in that quarter, the heavens present no special object of interest to the master of the Manor-house. In another part of the garden stands his laboratory, where he makes chemical experiments

and develops photographs taken by himself with appalling unlikeness to the nature they misrepresent, and his studio, a neat edifice of wood and corrugated iron, with a wooden lay-figure drunkenly propped up in one corner inside, and a study in oils, of the direst kind, reposing half finished on the easel. It represented, if I remember, a knight in armor helping a mediæval lady out of a difficulty in which a dragon had been concerned, and was very romantic and exceedingly imaginative, and extraordinarily out of drawing. In the features of the knight—whose developments were wonderful—I recognized a likeness to the artist, and told him so. Hoell chuckled and rubbed his hands, asking, 'Did I see no resemblance in the face of the lady to any other face I knew?'

"'No,' I told him. I had seen no living countenance whose facial architecture was of the same period and description. 'No!' I said. He was hugely disappointed, it was plain.

"'No?' he repeated, staring disconsolately at the work of his brush. 'No? Think again!'

"I thought; to no purpose.

"'Never mind,' said Hoell, dismally.

"I had a bad memory for faces, I told him. The likeness might be an admirable likeness, and my infirmity alone to blame!

"He shook his head. No man having once seen the face he had tried to reproduce upon his canvas would be likely to forget it, he gave me to understand. And in a sudden fury of disappointment and anger at his own failure, he caught up the palette-knife and stabbed the canvas through and through.

"'I'm a libellous idiot,' he cried, hacking and ripping away quite fiercely; and the picture's a miserable daub!' His anger sank down and died in another moment. He pointed to the picture hanging in tatters from the frame.

"'I wish I hadn't done it!' he said. 'I feel like a murderer, somehow. I worked at it so carefully, day by day, fancying with each touch of the brush that it grew more and more like—' He stopped and sighed. 'I wish I hadn't done it,' he said. 'But wishing is no use now. Come away.'

"He took me back to the house, moving more slowly and more painfully than usual, in the weariness and depression that had fallen on him. But there we found one of the Hall servants

waiting with a message from his mistress, and Hoell's spirits sprang up miles above zero again as he tore open the note.

"'It's Rosalind's birthday on Friday. Will I mind, once in a way, the presence of a few old friends—friends like myself, too old to be overlooked on such an occasion—and come to dinner at seven?' he quoted. 'Will I? For you to ask, dear madam, is for me to obey!' He kissed the note with grotesque devotion, and thrust it in his breast. He hobbled to his elaborate writing-table, he rattled out all the drawers, noisily looking, for paper and pen. 'I must have a new quill to write with,' said Hoell. 'I must have paper that smells as prettily and feels as smooth as the paper the invitation is written on. My phrases must be choice—my language clear and flowing, like my ink, when I write in answer to a lady's letter.' I approached him with the intention of taking my leave—Hoell looked round at me, over his shoulder, and waved me off imperiously. 'Don't, there's a good fellow, discompose me by saying good-bye at this particular moment. Wait till I've written the answer to my invitation and sealed it and sent it away!' I humored him by remaining and looking at the books and pictures while he wrote. A collection of miniatures on ivory, and portrait-medallions in wax and other materials, arranged in a case handsomely lined with purple velvet and hanging on the wall, attracted my attention. The subjects of the miniatures were, without exception, women, and seemed—judging by their costumes, and more particularly the styles and fashions exhibited in the arrangement of their hair—to have been selected indiscriminately from every period of the world's civilized history down to the present time. One or two of the faces were familiar to me, others unknown. Some were evidently valuable and rare, others of no particular worth or merit in execution. I was looking at the miniatures when Hoell sealed his note; I was looking at them still when, having triumphantly despatched it, he rejoined me.

"'You have been looking at my miniatures?' he said. I acknowledged that the collection had interested me.

"'It may interest other people, dozens of years hence,' returned Hoell, 'when it hangs on the walls of the museum to which I have left it in my will.'

"'Is the collection —?' I began.

"'Of value?' supplied Hoell, pompously. 'Inestimable—in

the eyes of a scientific student who had chosen for his especial line of study the tendency, innate or inherited, of that unfortunate class of human beings whom we, in our insufferable self-conceit, call criminals, to crime.'

"'To crime?' I repeated.

"'To crime,' reiterated Hoell. 'To the crime of homicide particularly: secret, stealthy, deadly murder, by the most secret, the stealthiest, the most deadly of all weapons—poison, in a word.'

"I started.

"'Every one of these charming creatures, all graceful, all cultivated—I make it a rule to admit no common murderess into my choice little gallery—every one of them has put out of the way one inconveniently obtrusive fellow-creature or more,' went on Hoell. 'Some, even, like female Davids, have disposed of their thousands—by means of poison; poison in drops, poison in doses, poison in little pills, poison in gloves and peaches, and pretty bouquets and sweet-scented gloves—poison administered with all the subtle ingenuity which distinguishes the female mind, and all the refined cruelty of which the female heart is capable. Pretty dears! Ingenious creatures!'

"He smiled complacently upon the leering, painted crew. He took a gilt taper-rod from the mantle-shelf, and indicated each member of the homicidal sisterhood with a tap on the glass that shielded her celebrated features from the dust, as it came to her turn to be numbered and classified.

"'Class one; period, classical,' began Hoell, assuming the tone and manner of a showman. 'Cleopatra, Queen of Egypt. From an ancient coin. One of the first female toxicologists known to history. Fond of experimenting on the human subject—widely celebrated in consequence of that little intrigue with Mark Antony, for the exact details regarding which I must refer you to ancient history and the works of Shakespeare. Expired from the combined effects of remorse, and the bite of an asp, somewhere about the year 30 B.C. Seductive and voluptuous type of person, no doubt, but if I had been in Antony's sandals,' said Hoell, confidentially, 'that deplorable affair of Actium would never have happened!'

"'Portrait-medallion in wax, from a cameo in the celebrated Museum of Florence. Profile of the Empress Agrippina, cele-

brated in history as being the mother of that much maligned potentate, Nero. Poisoned her third husband Anno Domini 54. Exact medium employed not known, but probably hellebore. Fine profile—calm, benevolent, and agreeable. This virtuous matron was removed, by order of her son, a few years subsequently.

“Class number two; period, mediæval; Queen Eleanor, spouse of Henry II. From an illuminated eleventh-century missal. Heroine of a certain romantic episode, in which a dagger, a bowl, a bower, and fair Rosamond were also included. Queen Joanna of Naples, another royal poisoner of the thirteenth century. Lucrezia Borgia, the distinguished Italian annihilatress of the fourteenth century, praised for her virtues by the poets of the time, and punished for her vices by being made into an opera later on. Both from authenticated likenesses by painters of the period.

“Catherine de Medici, fifteenth century. The science of removing unnecessary human units from out this mortal scheme was practised with uniform success by this reprehensible but attractive person during the whole of a long and actively-spent existence. Aha!” Hoell tapped the miniature twice upon the stomacher. ‘Here’s a slyboots,’ he said, approvingly, with his head on one side. ‘Look at her! Royal dignity, modest matronly grace, in every line. Ripe and tempting, though. Cornelia, with a dash of Uncle Toby’s widow, and a spice of the devil to add to the flavor! Think of all the schemes and plots that matured behind that smooth, fine forehead! Think of all the passions that writhed and twisted and hissed and bit under that plump, white bosom, and lurked like imps in those seductive little dimples, and frolicked, like imps again, in the corners of those handsome black eyes, and admire Catherine—as I do!

“Sixteenth century. The Countess of Essex, afterwards Countess of Somerset, a reprehensible beauty of the Court of James the First. She punished a meddling baronet, Sir Thomas Overbury by name, for prejudicing her matrimonial prospects, by getting him imprisoned in the Tower and afterwards poisoning him in a pie. Let a potion, from salts and senna to prussic acid, be offered me to-morrow morning by such hands, and I positively declare—I’ll drink it.”

“He sighed, and ogled the countess pensively before proceeding.

““ This attractive young person, represented in white robes, clasping a crucifix, is not a saint or a martyr, as one would at first suppose. Her name was Mary Margaret D'Aubray, Marquise de Brinvilliers. She was a belle, a wit, and a widow, well known in Parisian society of the sixteenth century; and, not content with playing at love and intrigue, as other charming ladies did, she went a little further, and played at filling church-yards. She succeeded so well that she lost her head—a pretty one, as you see. They afterwards publicly burned her body. A barbarous era!—a barbarous era!

““ Class number three; seventeenth century to our own time. Oval medallion, carved in ivory, valuable and rare. Taken from a portrait by Nicolese, of Padua, of Signora Tofania, a famous female druggist, who attained a handsome competence and a world-wide reputation for the artificial manufacture of widows—I forget in whose reign. Gifted creature! One would wish to have known her!

““ Painting on china—by a French artist who attended her trial and fell in love with her before it was over—of Marie Fortunée Capelle—the widow of Lafarge—tried at the High Court of Assizes, at Tulle, in 1840, accused of having poisoned her husband with arsenic, administered in a plum-cake. First, second, and third analyses of Papa Lafarge's remains having proved abortive, the prisoner became the subject of an extraordinary manifestation on the part of the public—though the Advocate-General and the President of the Tribunal, from first to last, were adamant to her very pronounced attractions and implacable in their unshaken conviction of her guilt. Result: institution of a fourth analysis. Consequence: arsenic detected in Papa Lafarge! Amid the sobs of her counsel, the groans of the gendarmes who had guarded her, and who were in love with her to a cocked hat—and the cries and curses of the crowd, who from first to last treated her as a victim, she was sentenced to penal servitude for life, with preliminary exposure in the pillory of Tulle. She spent twelve years in close confinement, and died shortly after her liberation from captivity by the Emperor Napoleon III., at the age of thirty-seven!

““ Sketch, in crayons, of Miss Margaret Baker, a young Scotch lady of high social position and considerable charms. Tried at Glasgow, in 1857, for the murder of her lover, Luigi Marotti, an

Italian dancing-master—a villain who only got what he deserved, in the opinion of a good many people, myself included. Arsenic again, administered in a cup of tea. Margaret's youth and beauty saved her from hanging. She was acquitted in the face of evidence sufficiently strong to have hanged an archbishop, amid shouts of rejoicing from the general populace; and in six months from that time she married the counsel for the defence. He lives still. Happy man!

“Portrait of Mrs. Oakley, from a photograph sold in the shop windows at the time of her trial, two years ago. Mrs. Oakley was the middle-aged but attractive widow of a military officer. Mrs. Oakley found her pension insufficient to live upon comfortably, and accepted a situation as house-keeper to an elderly bachelor of literary tastes. For five years the elderly bachelor and his engaging house-keeper lived in absolute harmony, and then—as the novelists say—clouds began to gather upon the horizon. The elderly bachelor was rash enough to fall in love with a pretty young lady; the elderly bachelor became a Benedict in due course, and brought home his wife. Mrs. Oakley received the new mistress with touching submission and delicate respect. Mrs. Oakley handed over her keys, but she remained in the house, though on the slightly altered footing of a companion and friend—to her supplanter. Three months had scarcely passed before the young wife of the house-keeper's elderly master fell ill. The doctors were called in and ascribed the indisposition to a purely natural cause. The doctors were wrong. Twenty-four hours after she expired in the arms of the ex-house-keeper, and the elderly Benedict, to all intents and purposes, was an elderly bachelor once more. Certain suspicious post-mortem appearances led to an inquest on the remains. Analysis revealed the presence in the body of a certain vegetable acid, in quantity sufficient to have killed half a dozen women. Inquiry elucidated the fact that Mrs. Oakley had purchased, from a neighboring chemist, a preparation containing this acid in solution—for some alleged domestic purpose—only a few days before the young lady's death. As might have been expected, the inquest resulted in the trial of the agreeable widow of the military man for the murder of her master's wife. The evidence obtained in the course of cross-examination contributed comparatively little to the establishment of the house-keeper's guilt, but a great deal to

the detriment of her character—and that of her elderly master. Here English public opinion—like Scotch public opinion in the case of Margaret Baker—pronounced Mrs. Oakley to be guilty, as far as her relations with her master were concerned, but innocent of the crime of murdering her master's wife. Useless, as far as the verdict went. The law condemned Mrs. Oakley to be executed; the law carried out its sentence to the last. She hangs here in my collection of murderesses, but there are people whose belief in her innocence remains unshaken to this day.'

"The case had been made into niches to hold sixteen portraits; and of these fifteen were occupied, leaving one place void and empty. Hoell tapped the remaining three portraits with his wand, and detailed the crimes perpetrated by their originals, and the leading particulars of their trials, with the same old relish for his subject and the same minute attention to localities and dates that he had shown all through.

"And so we come to the end of the collection,' he said, dropping his show-man's manner as lightly as he dropped his show-man's wand, and looking at me in the old whimsical way. I don't know what possessed me. I laid my finger on the empty niche. I spoke to Hoell with a coarse levity, of which—considering the hideous character of the subject on which I jested—I ought to have been heartily ashamed.

"Not the end, yet,' I said. 'Here's one murderess's cell waiting for her, empty. What woman's face, of all the faces in the world, is doomed to fill this vacant place, I wonder?'

"Why,' returned Hoell, lightly, 'that's a question the answering of which, with all our cleverness, we must leave to Time—to Time and to Fate!'

CHAPTER XII.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

"September 18th.

"NOTHING of great note to note, except that to-morrow is the anniversary of my pretty niece Rosalind's twentieth birthday, and more people than Hoell and myself have been racking their brains over the problem which renews itself before this fortunate young

person's friends and relations several times in the course of a year: *how to make a present of something that she has not got, to a young lady who has got everything in the world?*

"It sounds a little like the title to an essay of Swift's, or somebody's.

"But Hoell and I have triumphed over the difficulties that at first appalled us. Rosalind's hunting-spur, disabled the other day, is to be replaced by the loveliest instrument of equine torture—in silver gilt—that ever was seen, and the miniature hunting-crop that is to accompany it is a like marvel of unfeminine perfection. Rosalind's desire—the universally expressed desire of polite society at the present moment, politely desirous of following in the musical footsteps of a Royal Christy Minstrel—Rosalind's desire to learn the banjo is to be assuaged by her uncle George with the gift of a Spanish guitar.

"I found it among my traps—or, as a lady would say, my things—which have been forwarded from Hull in due course, tucked away in the corner of a big chest, with the marks of twenty different custom-houses on it, and addresses, plain and partly obliterated, in every language under the sun. It is small and light, of rich color and fine grain, and admirable tone. The art of making such an instrument is practically a lost art, except among the—

"The gypsies have no place in this respectable record of Christian domestic life. Never mind the man who made my niece's guitar! It is enough to say that he was one of the most abominable rascals I have ever met, as well as the most skilled workman at his own trade. Though, indeed, horse-stealing, purse-cutting, spying, swindling, and blackguardism generally, were trades of his; and guitar-making only came in as a resource in the event of the failure of more risky employments.

"But my Journal must be shut up with the ink still wet on the leaf. Here is the page-boy, grinning at my elbow, with a note from my sister-in-law. Here is one of the maids, simpering outside the door, with a message from my niece. Mrs. Kavanagh's kind regards, and will I step down-stairs to her private room and be consulted on a matter of business? Miss Rosalind's best love, and she's waiting for me at the courts, with every intention of carrying out her recent threat of teaching me to play lawn-tennis. Business before pleasure—of that apoplectic kind. I have sent

my love to Rosalind—with an excuse—and I'm going to answer my sister-in-law's message in person!

“Mrs. Kavanagh's private room—it used to be the boudoir in my mother's time; but its present owner manifests a healthy dislike to the employment of foreign terms where honest English words are as suitable for all purposes—Mrs. Kavanagh's private room is at the rear of the house on the ground-floor; and in common with the drawing-room, the dining-room, and the library, possesses French windows opening on the paved terrace that looks upon the garden. The carpet, the window-draperies, and the heavy velvet curtains that divide the sitting-room from the bedroom beyond are all in the same subdued, delicate shade of tawny pink which was old-fashioned when I was a boy, and has now turned up again, at the top of the upholsterer's tree, as the very newest thing out. The panelling and wood-work and furniture of the room are in white lacquer, just as I remember them in the dear old days; delicately painted and inlaid with groups and garlands of leaves and flowers in the same shell-like shade of tawny pink as the carpet and curtains. As of old, the room overflows with curiosities and feminine knick-knacks; rare china and valuable specimens of English water-color art hang on the walls and load the stands and brackets; the very clock upon the mantel-piece—a valuable specimen of antique French buhl and brass-work, with a figure of Time on the top of it, and a musical-box in its inside—is the one I used to wonder at and listen to when I was a child. The room is unchanged, only it owns a new mistress now; and as I looked at her on entering, it struck me that the surroundings that once seemed part of, and appropriate to my mother's lovely old age, made a no less effective setting now for my sister-in-law in her beautiful maturity.

“She was leaning at her writing-table, with her chin upon her hand, deep in thought. When I went in she turned and smiled, her own charming smile, at seeing me. She gave me her cordial hand. She appealed to me in her mellow tones to help her with my advice. And I—who am not capable of advising myself correctly in the most trivial dilemma—I threw myself into the breach! I assumed the magisterial air of a second Solomon—for I knew that nine women out of ten, in appealing to a masculine creature for counsel and guidance, generally take the

precaution of letting him know first what they expect him to say!

"The business was of sufficient, if not portentous, gravity. It related to Rosalind's birthday dinner-party. My sister-in-law, in considerate recognition of my long absence from my native land, began by informing me that—to solemn domestic festivals, such as christenings, birthdays, weddings, or funerals—it is the custom to invite all the oldest mutual friends of the family, without previous selection, whether they get on well together or whether they don't. Their tenderest susceptibilities may be wounded by being asked to meet persons whom they regard with mild distrust, deep suspicion, or ardent loathing, as the case may be; but if they are not asked, it is certain that their finest feelings will be outraged beyond redress. Two irreconcilable elements mingled in the composition of my niece Rosalind's birthday party. Lady Butterworth and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley were the two irreconcilable elements—Lady Butterworth and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley, leaders of the rival political factions of the Daffodils and the Greens.

"Are they certain to quarrel, if they meet?" I asked.

"Almost absolutely certain!" said Mrs. Kavanagh.

"I had a bright idea.

"Do as you have done on all former occasions of the kind."

"Upon former occasions of the kind," she returned, "there was no need for caution. A twelvemonth ago Lady Butterworth and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley were bosom friends, and copied each other's bonnets as religiously as they now differ from each other's political opinions. The Daffodil had hardly taken root in the county a twelvemonth ago. We were not patriotic in those days, but we were peaceful. Dare I say that I regret those days, for one?"

"I say so, too," I burst out, "if politics, green or yellow, or all the colors of the solar spectrum, are to interfere with the harmony of my niece Rosalind's birthday party! But I see what has got to be done, if you don't. A warning has got to be wrapped up, like a pill, in a gracefully worded invitation, in the case of both these ladies. Not a word more, not a word less on either side. We won't leave a single loop-hole for jealousy to look out of. Every "i" shall be dotted and every "t" crossed in exactly the same way, and two special messengers shall deposit

the respective missives—at an identical moment, if possible—in the hands of Lady Butterworth and of Mrs. Dabb-Hendley.’

“My sister-in-law looked at me gratefully. My sister-in-law took my advice. I wish she hadn’t!

“‘An admirable idea!’ said my sister-in-law. ‘A capital plan! Ah! how our trivial feminine difficulties vanish, once the light of reason is brought to bear upon them by a clear-headed, logical man.’ With this graceful tribute to the superiority of the male intellect, my sister-in-law, looking handsomer than ever, sat down to write the letters.

“Here is No. 1:

“‘DEAREST LADY BUTTERWORTH.—To-morrow being Rosalind’s birthday, we have asked a few of our very oldest and dearest friends to dine with us in a quiet humdrum way. Will the oldest and dearest of them all join us on the occasion?

Affectionately yours,

“‘CATHERINE KAVANAGH.

“‘P.S.—Mrs. Dabb-Hendley is coming. Do you mind meeting her for once?—C. K.’

“No. 2 ran:

“‘DEAREST MRS. DABB-HENDLEY.—To-morrow being Rosalind’s birthday, we have asked a few of our very oldest and dearest friends to dine with us in a quiet humdrum way. Will the oldest and dearest of them all join us on the occasion?

Affectionately yours,

“‘CATHERINE KAVANAGH.

“‘P.S.—Lady Butterworth is coming. Do you mind meeting her for once?—C.K.’

“We divided the labor between us. I dictated the letters, Mrs. Kavanagh wrote them; and I put them in the envelopes—I wish I hadn’t, now!—which she directed.

“When it was all over, she gave me her charming hand again, and thanked me for my advice and my assistance.

“‘But you shall be rewarded,’ she said, smiling at me, as she unlocked a little drawer in her writing-table. You shall see Rosalind’s birthday present before she sees it herself.’ From a nest of cotton-wool she took a little jeweller’s case and opened it. It held a pretty gold bracelet. She touched a little knob, a tiny door jumped open. Rosalind’s charming bracelet held something more charming still. The portrait of Mrs. Kavanagh.

“I took the dainty ornament in my hand and examined the

portrait. The sun might have originally given a faithful reproduction of Mrs. Kavanagh's face, but the artist had spoiled the sun's work with the best intentions in the world. The straight, rather massive outlines were there, and the serious gray hazel-eyes. The hair in the portrait was light glossy brown, like Mrs. Kavanagh's hair, but without the line or two of silver that, in the eyes that love her, only adds to its beauty. The firm, tender lines of the mouth had been rudely coarsened, the squareness of the jaw and chin unpleasantly exaggerated, and the whole face too heavily overlaid with color. As I held the portrait in my hand and compared it with the original, the sight of it disappointed and hurt me vaguely. The sight of it had another effect on me besides. I stood again in imagination in Hoell Brin-nilow's studio, before his weak, poor miserable outrage on a noble art. I heard him ask me again whether I detected in the face he had vainly striven to portray no likeness to any face I knew. Had I by chance stumbled upon the secret of that lonely heart, the hidden romance of that wasted, withered life? Did Hoell love the woman who had been in her beautiful compassion and tenderness more than a sister to him, more than a sister should be loved, after all?

"I looked up from the portrait. With sad conjecture of the truth written in my own eyes, I met the eyes of its original. Startled and shocked by the expression that confronted me, I was betrayed into an exclamation of surprise. For as the gypsy woman had looked at me on the morning of my early visit to the garden, so my sister-in-law looked at me now. Anger and surprise combined in her expression; resentment and defiance mingled in her tone when she spoke. Of what should she have suspected *me*? What had *I* done to merit her anger?

"'Give me back the bracelet,' she said, harshly. 'What do you see in the portrait? Of whom does it remind you that you should look at me like that?'

"She snatched the ornament from me before I had time to give it her, with a roughness strangely foreign to her nature. She hid it in her pocket out of sight. The moment she had done this she was herself again. The strange look died out of her eyes; she held out her hand to me with her old sweetness of manner; she apologized unaffectedly for the momentary loss

of her temper in tones which would have won pardon for a much more heinous offence, to my thinking.

“‘Shall I tell you what was the matter with me just now?’ she said. ‘Shall I let you into the secret of my weakness? Ah, my friend, your face, as you looked at my portrait a moment ago, told me what your lips would never tell me: that I am getting old, and the sun and the artist between them have found it out.’ She stopped me when I would have spoken, by touching my lips with her hand. ‘Do you, who are a man and have no vanity in your composition, despise me for being a woman and yielding to the universal failing of my sex?’ she said, softly. ‘Ah, no. Men are generous. You, of all men, are too generous for that.’

“How well she understood me, the frank, noble creature! Despise *her*! I had no words wherewith to disclaim such an idea. I could only kiss her hand in silence.

“‘Let me tell you what I have decided,’ she went on. ‘Rosalind shall have the bracelet without the portrait, after all. We will take it out of its little case, and we will put in, instead, a bit of my hair, and a bit of her father’s, and a bit of yours, plaited together, to remind her of us when she is a middle-aged woman and we are dead and gone. Let your contribution be made at once. Sit down, George, this moment, and let me cut off a lock of your nice white hair.’

“I hesitated.

“‘Come,’ she said; ‘it’s for Rosalind’s bracelet! You will give a lock of your hair to Rosalind, even if you won’t give one to me!’ She held up a little pair of scissors persuasively; the charm of her voice and her manner would have lured me into consenting, like a fool, if she had made a proposition to cut my head off, instead of my hair! But at that moment my irresolute glance, straying through the window, showed me Rosalind crossing the lawn beyond the terrace, with Sir Philip, like an obedient mastiff, following at her heels.

“‘Never mind *my* hair, dear lady,’ I said. ‘It’s the wrong color to put in a locket; it’s another kind of thing that pretty young ladies like to wear. Ask Philip for one of those nice crisp, yellow curls of his to put in Rosalind’s bracelet! Ask Philip for that nice honest heart of his, to be made into a cushion for Rosalind to stick pins in, and see whether Philip says no or yes!’

"Mrs. Kavanagh drew away from me suddenly.

"What are you hinting at?" she said, coldly. "What do you mean?"

"Is it possible, for once, that a woman's instinct has proved inferior to a man's—where a love affair is concerned?" I returned.

"She caught my arm and looked me in the face.

"Answer me," she commanded, imperiously. "What is it that your instinct has told *you* and *my* instinct doesn't tell me? What is it that you see and I don't see? Answer me!"

"I raised my arm and pointed to the couple on the lawn.

"Look there!"

"Her eyes followed mine. *She* saw them, as *I* saw them, standing together in the golden autumn sunshine, among the flowers, side by side. Ah, the happy, beautiful, selfish young creatures—absorbed in one another, wrapped in the blissful knowledge of each other's nearness—deaf and blind and insensible to the existence of any world outside their own world of thrilling happiness and new-awakened love!

"I saw her start. I saw her put her hand to her heart, as if a knife-stroke had been dealt her there. I understood, and I was sorry for Rosalind's mother.

"Oh, Rosalind—Rosalind!" she said. "Has there been so little confidence between us in all these years? Have I deserved that a stranger should be the first to show me the secret of my daughter's heart! Oh, Rosalind—Rosalind!"

"Nothing but that; no bitterer reproach. But I saw her hands go up to meet and cover her face—I heard her sob as she went away out of the room and left me."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

"I STEPPED out of the window upon the terrace. I went to meet my niece. She came to meet *me* for her part, and enlisted my sympathies by putting both her hands round my arm and squeezing it before she claimed them.

"Look at me, Uncle George," was her first request, "and tell me what you see!"

“‘I see the happiest and the prettiest young feminine party in Great Britain, my dear,’ said I.

“‘You don’t,’ said Rosalind, contradicting me flatly the moment I spoke. ‘You see the most miserable and the most ill-used. Look at Philip standing there sulking. Do you know what he has done?’

“‘I looked at her fresh lips, pouting within a few inches of my own, thinking that I knew very well what Philip would like to do. I did it myself, straight away, and both Philip and Rosalind blushed, oddly enough, at that very moment.

“‘Tell me, my dear,’ I said, ‘what has Philip done?’

“‘Philip has proved himself a traitor,’ returned my niece. ‘Philip has deserted me in the hour of need. Philip won’t come and help mamma and me to entertain all the stupid people who are coming to dinner to-morrow night; and he has put forward, in extenuation of his unworthy conduct, the clumsiest excuse I ever heard made in my life.’

“‘Upon my soul and honor, it’s not my fault!’ burst out Philip. ‘Upon my honor and soul, I’m confoundedly disappointed and abominably vexed that I should be obliged to stay away on such—such an occasion! I’ve explained to Miss Rosalind, sir, that I’m not to blame—but she won’t listen to me. May I explain to you—?’

“‘Rosalind stopped him, with charming impertinence, just as he was going to begin.

“‘Philip has a friend,’ she said, ‘who disappeared mysteriously more than twelve years ago, and has never been heard of until this minute, when—as mysteriously as he disappeared—he turns up again, having travelled from the other end of the world on purpose to make himself disagreeable to me.’

“‘My dear,’ I said, ‘it is only reasonable to suppose that Philip knows his own business best.’

“‘Philip doesn’t,’ said Rosalind, contradicting me as flatly as before; ‘and if you are going to uphold him in his want of consideration for me, I may as well leave you together.’ She pretended to walk away from us in high dudgeon.

“Philip made a movement to follow her; I laid my hand upon the foolish fellow’s arm. Rosalind saw the movement and came back instantly.

“‘He’s the oldest friend I have,’ Philip said, harking back to

the old subject. 'We were boys together at school, and he saved me from drowning—dived, with all his clothes on, to the bottom of the deepest pool in the river one hot day, and brought me up in his teeth, as if I had been a squirming puppy and he a big Newfoundland dog. I tried to thank him afterwards, and he shut me up by giving me the soundest thrashing I ever had in my life. "That's to teach you not to get into mischief again, you little beggar," he said, "and to keep you from catching cold." Am I wrong,' appealed Philip to me, 'in calling him my best friend—after *that*?'

"'Why didn't you tell *me* that story?' interrupted his imperious mistress, with a stamp of her foot. 'Why didn't you tell me that your tiresome friend saved your life? I like him for that, of course. But I hate him for thrashing you afterwards, and for coming back to monopolize your attentions at a time when I want to monopolize them myself. I consider him a nuisance and a bore.'

"'Let her talk!' I said, nipping Philip's protest that the thrashing did him good, and his friend wouldn't have come on that day of all days if he had known, and so forth, neatly in the bud. 'What more about your friend?'

"'We parted, under sad circumstances, twelve years ago,' went on Philip. 'He has written to me at odd times, but the changes that time has brought to both of us have never brought us near enough to each other to allow of our meeting until now. He has been travelling in Turkestan and Russia, as the correspondent of a New York newspaper, during the last few years, his letter says; and he only landed in England the other day. And his first thought was,' Philip went on, warming with the subject, 'of his old schoolfellow and friend. And he is coming to spend a few days with me at The Chase, before starting for an unpronounceable somewhere in a perfectly undecipherable quarter of the globe—I was always a bad hand at making out handwriting! And with the intention of assuaging the rabid desire of the American public for information upon the manners, morals, history, and religion of an aboriginal race with an absolutely hieroglyphical name, through the medium of the transatlantic press. And—'

"'And the day on which your friend is destined to arrive,' I put in, 'is the day of the birthday dinner-party?'

“‘Just so,’ answered Philip.

“‘Come,’ I said, ‘the difficulty may be got over more easily than you think. Why should not your friend make one of the company? Bring him over to dinner with you at seven o’clock—I’ll answer for his being welcome, and so will my niece—and the thing’s settled.’

“‘The very thing I said myself,’ cried Rosalind. ‘The very thing papa said. The very thing mamma would say, if she were here. “Bring your friend over to dinner.” But Philip doesn’t see it as *we* see it. If I stay here, trying to make him, I shall end by losing my temper,’ said my niece, perfectly unconscious that she had mislaid that valuable article long ago. ‘It’s unladylike to lose one’s temper. I’m going back to the house.’

“She walked off in good earnest *this* time. Philip, who would have followed her with his legs if I hadn’t been there, followed her with his eyes instead.

“‘Give me your advice, sir,’ he broke out, as the pretty, wilful creature vanished into the house. ‘I’m placed in a strange situation: I’m faced by no common difficulty in the matter of my friend. In common decency to him as my guest, I can hardly leave him to himself on the day of his arrival. In common humanity to another person—’ He stopped, and then went on again: ‘Among the guests who may be expected to be present at this house to-morrow night is one person in particular whom the recognition of my friend would be likely to affect painfully and unpleasantly; who, in his turn, is associated with events—long past—which my friend himself would rather not recall—’

“He broke off, or I stopped him by a question—it’s all the same.

“‘Is the person whom your friend is likely to meet in this house, and who is associated with past events which are painful to him to remember, a man or a woman?’ I asked.

“He answered, ‘A man.’

“At that moment the sound of a little bell, tinkled gayly, proceeded from the house. Rosalind and Hoell Brinnilow appeared at the drawing-room window. The little bell, brandished in Hoell’s hand, tinkled again. They called to us. Rosalind waved her hand. Distance swallowed up the greater part of the communication addressed to us, but we distinguished the faintly articulated syllables forming the two words: ‘Afternoon tea.’

"Philip's attention became diverted, on the instant, back to Rosalind. Philip, with ostrich-like subtlety, sheltered his real motive for going back to the house behind an affected desire for the mild stimulant already mentioned. 'I think I should like some tea—if you'll excuse me,' said Philip. He nodded to me and started towards the house.

"I followed him. As he set his foot upon the steps leading up to the paved terrace, a man in a groom's livery came out of the house. I recognized the man to be a servant from The Chase. He touched his hat, and drew a yellow envelope from his belt, and held it out to his master as gingerly as if it had been a lighted squib instead of a telegraphic message.

"'My lady sent me over with this, Sir Philip,' he began; 'my lady thought it might have been important. I was to give it you myself, my lady said, and to bring back word, for certain, that there was no bad news.'

"Philip tore the crackling envelope open. The receipt of a telegram in the country is a different thing to the receipt of a telegram in town. I watched his face as he was reading it as anxiously as the groom. I dare say I looked as foolishly relieved as the groom did when he crumpled up the telegram carelessly in his hand and tossed it away. 'No bad news,' he answered. He nodded to the groom, the groom touched his hat and vanished. 'My mind's at rest,' said Philip. 'The question is answered, the difficulty that I spoke of just now has been removed.' He clapped me on the shoulder, cheerfully. 'My friend has been detained in town,' he said; 'my friend won't arrive till the day after to-morrow. Nobody will be hurt; nobody will be vexed. And I sha'n't be obliged to stay away from Rosalind's birthday-party, after all. Let's go in and tell her.'

"He hummed a tune as he cleared the steps, with the light-heartedness of any school-boy. I followed him with the outward decorum that becomes my age, but with all sorts of conjectures swarming in my brain round the nameless and undefined figure of Philip's friend. What is Philip's friend like? Why didn't Philip tell us his friend's name? Who is the man who mustn't meet Philip's friend? Who is the man Philip's friend oughtn't to meet? Building up in my mind as inconsequent and meaningless and rambling an edifice as that other house—that Jack built."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

September 20th.

“LET me recall, and set down in their natural sequence, the events of yesterday.

“They have had, I confess it, an unpleasant effect upon me; they have shaken and startled me; they have renewed associations and awakened memories which I would rather had remained undisturbed. The first dissonant chord in the harmony of the day was struck at breakfast. I may, in an indirect manner, have helped to strike it. I don’t deny that the blunder originally was mine. I’m not too old to learn a lesson, and the lesson I imbibed with my coffee yesterday morning, and took in with my toast and eggs, was: never meddle in matters—especially where women are involved—that don’t concern you; never, by any chance, give a woman advice—unless you have admirable grounds for believing that she isn’t going to take it! ”

“Two notes were delivered to my sister-in-law as we sat at breakfast. One was written in a spidery hand on pale yellow paper, and the other in a sprawling one on pale green. Both were highly scented, and adorned with indecipherable monograms. The perusal of these missives had an extraordinary effect on the lady to whom they were addressed.

“She rose from her chair—my brother’s wife is a tall woman, and, as old-fashioned people would say, a woman with a presence. She was pale, but composed. She paid no attention when my brother, in a tone of unfeigned alarm, asked what the matter was. She swept round the table to my side, and laid the revolting missives before me. She said in a tone that would have done the highest credit to an actress of high tragedy—supposing one to exist in these degenerate days—‘George, George! *What have you done?*’

“I wanted to know myself. I took up one of the notes; I

inhaled its nauseous odors ; I deciphered its sprawling sentences. They ran as follows, as I read them out aloud :

“ ‘DEAR MRS. KAVANAGH.—The enclosed, received yesterday, I beg to return without *comment of any kind*, as it evidently was not originally intended for the perusal of yours truly, ‘CECILIA BUTTERWORTH.’ ”

“ I unfolded the enclosure.

“ The wording was mine, the handwriting Mrs. Kavanagh’s. It began, ‘Dearest Mrs. Dabb-Hendley.’ A cold sweat broke out of me at every pore. ‘Old friends—oldest and *dearest of all*.’ ‘Dearest of all—Lady Butterworth—mind for once?’ May Heaven forgive me ! I had put the letters into the wrong envelopes !

“ No need to glance at the other note. No need to read it ; I knew beforehand what it contained. Lavinia Dabb-Hendley begged to return the enclosed, which evidently had not been intended for *her* perusal, without *one word of comment* (underlined), and remained, with frigid regards, truly, Mrs. Kavanagh’s.

“ There was a hideous pause, broken by my brother James, an easy-going man of few words. In my crushed and broken condition I felt grateful to him.

“ ‘The devil !’ he said, and gave a whistle.

“ ‘What will be done to us, mamma?’ asked Rosalind. ‘Shall we be hanged, drawn and quartered, in the good old Conservative style, or blown up by the latest invention in the explosive line known to science? Will Lady Butterworth and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley lead their rival forces to besiege our gates? Are we to be the cause of Uncivil War in England—in the nineteenth century?’

“ She ceased her fanciful flow of nonsense, seeing that her step-mother was really hurt and annoyed. She rose, and came to her side, and kissed her. ‘You mustn’t be vexed ; I can’t have you look vexed on my birthday,’ she said. ‘Besides, what do we care for all the old frumps in the county, as long as you have got me and I have got you?’ She kissed her mother again. ‘Tell Uncle George that you forgive him,’ she pleaded, with a twinkle in her bright eyes. ‘Tell him that Lady Butterworth and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley were spoiling for a fight, as Americans say, and that he has given them the opportunity they wanted!’

“Rosalind’s argument prevailed where more logical reasoning would have been useless. Mrs. Kavanagh returned the caress, smoothing her daughter’s bright hair fondly. Her forehead lost its frown, her eyes their sternness, under the simple magic of the touch and the voice she loved; she held out her hand to me with cordiality; she received my apologies with her usual delightful grace. The storm blew over; I reached the shore of comparative calmness, wrapped in some remaining rags of self-respect.

“How the wrath of Lady Butterworth was extinguished, and the ire of Mrs. Dabb-Hendley became appeased, I don’t know to this day. But, political differences apart, they are sensible, agreeable persons enough, and sufficiently attached to Mrs. Kavanagh to accept her double apology and explanation with a good grace. Perhaps, as Rosalind privately informed me, it would have been a severe deprivation to both of them had they missed a single opportunity of disapproving of one another in public. At any rate, they arrived late upon the neutral ground of the Hall drawing-room last evening, arrayed in party manifestations of daffodil satin (softened with black lace), and grass-green *moire-antique*; and subsequently greeted each other with the genial ease and cordial cheerfulness that might have distinguished the social intercourse of Roxana and Statira. Sir William Butterworth, a bluff, red-faced old gentleman, and Mr. Dabb-Hendley, who, before he blossomed into a millionaire and a land-owner, was well known as a hard-headed, money-making Norwich solicitor, followed, and shook hands like men who mutually pitied and esteemed each other. Flora Butterworth, who, by the way, is a bosom friend of my niece, and Miss Dabb-Hendley, who is another, followed, arm-in-arm; and after enfolding Rosalind in turn, sprang elastically back again, and entwined about each other as if the primary tints of green and yellow had been banished from the solar spectrum, and such things as political principles had never been known to exist.

“The dinner-party was not a large one, and the circumstance of everybody’s being an old friend of everybody else’s caused the conversation generally to hang fire. There was the elderly Scotch doctor—who attended Rosalind when she was a child—with his homely Scotch wife, from the neighboring seaport town. There was the rector, who grounded me in Latin when I

was a boy, with his niece, now a confirmed elderly spinster, who grounded me at the same time in love. There was the curate and his mother, an irascible old lady in an obsolete China shawl and a head-dress trimmed with turrets of lavender ribbon. Lord Dedly Slowe, incubating candidate for Slowetown, and Perpetual Grand-master of the Daffodil Demonstrators, in that division of the county, brought his two sisters, who are good-looking young women of the high-nosed, sandy-haired type, and equally afflicted with constitutional inability to pronounce the letter 'r.' And Sir Philip Lidyard, handsome and debonair, and as much in love with my niece as usual, and, last of all, Hoell Brinnilow, made up the list of the invited guests.

"Hoell in vivacious spirits. Hoell—it goes without saying—splendidly attired and profusely adorned with jewelry. Hoell, with a gorgeous opal stud blazing upon the embroidered shirt-front that covered his poor, misshapen bosom, and with a button-hole gardenia of stupendous size and excruciating odor, encroaching on his very chin. His very crutches were of ebony, silver-mounted, and cushioned with black velvet. The same indomitable determination, or strange idiosyncrasy, which leads him to ignore the fact of his own physical feebleness, led him upon this, as upon other occasions, to indulge in an extravagance of personal adornment which the most effeminate of able-bodied dandies would scarcely have ventured to display, while, at the same time, his painful, inward consciousness of his infirmity, and the shrinking dislike to the society of strangers which is its natural result—and which he had conquered on this occasion out of regard for an old friend—manifested itself in an exaggeration of speech and demeanor which must have appeared strained and unnatural, even to those who knew him least. He took Rosalind's hand and kissed it, and laid it reverently against his waistcoat, when she thanked him in her own frank way for his exquisite present. He greeted Flora Butterworth—a charming but untidy young lady in spectacles, who has recently passed her examination in medicine at a London college and means by-and-by to carve out a surgical career for herself upon the bodies of her friends—with rapturous effusion, and saluted Miss Dabb-Hendley like the first figure in a minuet. He quoted modern erotic poetry to the rector's niece, who is fond of airing a moderate acquaintance with Wordsworth and Mrs. Hemans.

He was a rattling sportsman with the eldest Miss Slowe, who is horsey, and a misappreciated poetical genius in the company of her sister, who is literary, and writes for, but not in, the magazines. He complimented Lady Butterworth on her lace and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley on her emeralds. He was half-a-dozen men in as many minutes, and none of them were natural or at ease; and when Sir William Butterworth, who is absent-mindedly given to talking to himself out loud, turned away and growled, in an undertone, 'The man's mad!' he only gave expression to the secret conviction of a good many of the company. Still, on the verge of his wildest extravagance, in the middle of some fresh development of eccentricity, a glance from Mrs. Kavanagh was sufficient to check Hoell for the time being, and restore him to his quieter and better self again.

"Dinner over, and hardly over for the curate, who had been compelled, at the point of his mother's eye, to leave untasted those dishes that he would willingly have partaken of, and to partake of those he would most willingly have left untasted; and who, under the same pressure, had jeopardized his curacy by snatching Grace from the rector's very lips at the outset of the meal, I made my abstemious foreign habits the excuse for leaving my elderly contemporaries to their wine, and preferring, in common with the younger gentlemen, the society of the ladies.

"We had a little music. Miss Dabb-Hendley sat down to the piano and let off a flight of musical rockets, with a crash at the end, as if the manufactory they were made in had blown up. She sang an Italian aria. Her mother whispered to me that she had been trained at Milan. True, no doubt; but, with the proverbial carelessness of most young ladies, Miss Dabb-Hendley has left both her voice and her accent behind her in coming away. Then the horsey Miss Slowe gave us a hunting song, with a refrain, a slight thing in its way, but supported on a solid foundation of 'Tally-ho!' I have been present at a *corroboree* of Australian aborigines, when the Cockatoo men, and those of a tribe belonging to Gippsland, Victoria, engaged in a whooping contest for the possession of a tub of rum-and-sugar. There was some yelling on that memorable occasion, on which the Cockatoos had the best of it; but the most piercing and strident of all the Cockatoos might have hung his head abashed in presence of the

horsey Miss Slowe! And her literary sister, who possesses ambitions in the elocutionary line, followed up with a recitation—a dreadful poem, all about a cavalier who bade his true-love farewell and rode away to the wars on his noble steed; and how the steed came galloping back to the stable door afterwards without him. And how there were reasonable grounds to believe that the cavalier had been slain in the fray, because there was blood on the saddle, and blood on the mane, and blood—in short, everywhere, though whether it was Radical blood or Tory blood Miss Slowe never stopped to say. And when the true-love had properly pined away and died, and been put away in her family vault—amid applause—we all felt very much depressed indeed.

“Mrs. Kavanagh went to the piano after that and sang a French song; Rosalind accompanied her. As I listened to the mellow tones of her voice, as I looked at her, I acknowledge that, in spite of her age, she was the handsomest woman in the room. She would merit this commendation, I don’t doubt, in a far more crowded assembly. She wore black, a mingling of costly lace and satin, and no better foil than the rich dusky material could have been found to set off the ivory whiteness of her beautiful arms and deep bosom, and of her noble throat. Scarcely more than a streak or two of silver mingles with the rich coils of her light-brown hair. I noticed as their heads approached, in speaking to each other for a moment, how much it resembled Rosalind’s in color. My charming niece, delightfully dressed in a color and after a fashion which no ignorant male pen may venture to describe, completed the picture.

“‘You have studied abroad,’ I said to my sister-in-law, when the cackle of indiscriminating praise began, ‘for you sing and speak French as no Englishwoman ever did, to my knowledge, who had been educated out of Paris.’

“Oddly enough, the compliment was not appreciated. My sister-in-law looked away from me almost as though I had annoyed her. She answered me, coldly and abruptly, ‘I was educated in Paris; I spent the first years of my girlhood in a boarding-school there.’ She moved away from me and began to talk to the doctor’s wife about her children at home.

“I looked round. Lady Butterworth and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley sat at one end of the long room, engaged in stately conference, like a couple of commanders-in-chief between whose belligerent

nations a treaty of peace had been concluded. My duties, as a member of the family, clearly lay in the direction of the curate's mother, who had established herself and her turrets in a large arm-chair. But when I approached that venerable person she waved me off commandingly. 'Go and talk to the young ladies, my good sir,' she said, 'and leave an old woman to amuse herself in her own way. I'm going to do what I always do in company—I'm going to look at the views.' She opened an immense volume of the views, and spread it across her lap. She put on her spectacles, and closed her eyes behind them. Her head nodded—a gentle snore testified to her appreciation of the views.

"I went to a window and stepped out upon the terrace. The hum of voices and the clinking of decanters mingled with the smell of cigar-smoke wafted through the open windows of the dining-room. Two figures hovered in the shadow of the house a little way down. The rector's elderly niece, who had initiated *me* when *I* was young into the mysteries of flirtation, had taken the submissive curate for a little promenade by moonshine upon the terrace. I leaned upon the low balustrade and looked out into the perfumed darkness of the garden. The swish of feminine draperies, the faint glimmer of a masculine shirt-front, revealed to me the whereabouts of Flora Butterworth and Lord Dedly Slowe, who had gone out for a little stroll by moonshine upon the lawn.

"I returned to the drawing-room. The literary Miss Slowe was now the centre of an eager group: Rosalind, Philip, the horsey sister, Miss Dabb-Hendley, and Hoell Brinnilow. They were all talking at once, and all holding out their hands. I had heard of the fashionable mania for palmistry before now. In the literary Miss Slowe I saw before me an amateur professor of the science—as understood by society in the nineteenth century—of reading the future of any human being by means of the lines of the hand. It has happened to me, more constantly than I can say, in the course of my wandering life, to associate with people—members of a race, the name of which need not appear in these pages—among whom the gift of divination, real or pretended, I can't say which—is handed down from generation to generation, and not acquired. Do I believe in the gift? What can I say? I can only remember the strange thrill that went through me years ago, when a dusky-brown finger, travelling

over the palm of a stranger in a strange land, traced the course of his life back to the source from which it sprang; and the voice, belonging to the owner of the crooked talon, told him what the secret of his heart was, and why he had become a wanderer. Repeated words spoken in the very room in which I stood now, by the beautiful, fickle, foolish young creature, who afterwards became my brother's wife—Rosalind's mother. Peace to her, I say! If she did me wrong, I forgave it long ago!

"Ah, well! I stood and listened to the prophecies of the society pythoness. She made some very bad shots, and one or two fairly good ones—knowing her ground, it may be presumed, beforehand. Bad or good, they were received with shrieks of laughter.

"Did you ever have your fortune told by a gypsy, Uncle George?" asked Rosalind, suddenly. Before I could check my niece by look or gesture, she addressed herself to the company. 'Uncle George knows more about the gypsies than anybody in the world,' she said, exaggerating, in the ingenuousness of her heart. 'The beautiful guitar Uncle George made me a present of to-day was made by a Spanish gypsy, a friend of Uncle George's. Uncle George has lived among the gypsies. He has written books about them. He knows all of their history that there is to know; and he talks their language better than they do themselves. For all I can say, he may be able to tell fortunes as well as the best of them. If you can tell fortunes, Uncle George, begin at once!' cried Rosalind; 'and, oh, for the love of Heaven, begin with me!'

"There was no retreat. Before I could escape they closed upon me. I became in an instant the centre of a circle of hands, all belonging to nineteenth-century young ladies and gentlemen, as loudly clamorous and as unaffectedly anxious to peep into the future as the most ignorant of their mediæval ancestors had been before them. At the risk of my lungs I calmed the tumult. I disclaimed any pretensions to occult lore; I denied ever having entertained, in the remotest way, any dealings with a potentate not generally mentioned in good society. It was true that a gypsy woman had once looked at my hand and told me my fortune—after a fashion. Among other things of more or less consequence, she had said that I possessed an extraordinary Line of Life, and would live to be an old, old man.

“‘When *I* was about three feet high and wore plaid petticoats’ announced Hoell, ‘I was taken to have my fortune told by a gypsy woman—or, at least, if she wasn’t a gypsy, she was a witch. She used to live in the village; the people went to her to buy herbs to doctor themselves. I believe all the half-pence that ought to have gone into the local practitioner’s pocket went into hers. Her daughter was my nurse, and my nurse took me to have my fortune told.’”

“‘And what did she tell you?’ broke in Rosalind, irrepressibly.

“‘She didn’t tell me anything,’ returned Hoell. ‘She looked in my face and she looked in my hand, and she turned her back on me without saying a word. And Pleasant Weather burst out crying and boxed my ears, and took me home again.’”

“‘Pleasant Weather;’ the quaint old-fashioned country name had a familiar sound, even in ears as strange as mine. The woman I encountered in the garden the other day, the woman I followed to the Manor-house, had been alluded to by Hoell as ‘Mrs. Weather.’ So Pleasant Weather is the daughter of the old gypsy herb-gatherer who wouldn’t tell Hoell’s fortune. A harmless interpretation might be put on her visit to the garden after that! The juice of the plant I saw in her hand—while owning properties better known and less beneficent—bears some reputation among the wild people whose blood runs in the house-keeper’s vein’s as a febrifuge. Perhaps the woman pursues, in a quiet way, her mother’s old occupation. Perhaps her mother’s knowledge of the properties of plants, harmless and harmful, has descended to her!

“‘Pleasant burst out crying, and took me home again,’ repeated Hoell, still harping on this reminiscence of his childhood. ‘I had never seen Pleasant cry before, and it impressed me a good deal. She had never boxed my ears before; and that impressed me a good deal more.’”

“‘Perhaps she was out of temper,’ suggested Philip, brilliantly.

“‘Perhaps she was,’ returned Hoell; ‘or perhaps there was something wrong with my Line of Life. Look into my hand, somebody who knows, and tell me if there is anything the matter with my Line of Life?’ He extended his hand, palm uppermost, for general inspection. He appealed to me, with childish

eagerness, to tell him which of the lines upon it was the Line of Life.

"I took his hand. Amid all the crowded lines upon the palm—lines curiously crossed and recrossed, diverging and starting from each other to cross again—the line to which such a strange significance has been attributed ever since man began to question Fate was plainly visible, starting from the base of the index finger, and curving round the root of the thumb towards the wrist; a line clearly marked at its beginning, hampered by a tangle of horizontal and diagonal lines, a little way on, breaking suddenly, a little farther, but rallying and struggling again, until it reached the middle of the hand, where it ended abruptly in—

"Never mind what that mark was. I once saw a hand in which the Line of Life, though starting differently, ended in the same curious way. The blood that stirred its pulses was young and warm, rich and generous. Its owner's fortune was told by a gypsy woman I knew. Let me only say that what was predicted came to pass, and get rid of the subject forever.

"As I hesitated another hand made its appearance beside Hoell's. It was large but beautifully formed. The softly-tinted palm, the long, firm, delicate fingers, told me that the hand was a woman's. No need to glance up the beautiful half-bare arm towards the face. The moment I touched the hand I knew to whom it belonged. I bent over, smiling, and scanned it. My eye rested upon, at its commencement, and slowly travelled down, the Line of Life. My heart gave a sudden throb and bound. A shudder went through me. For the third time in my life I had seen the sign, liable to such a dreadful interpretation, in the hand of a friend. Before I could speak, Hoell spoke:

"'You have told *me* nothing yet,' he broke in, gayly. 'Relieve my suspense. Put an end to my misery and tell me—am I to be hanged or not?'

"There was a burst of laughter at this sally. But the room seemed to darken for an instant before my eyes. I dropped both hands as if they had stung me, and turned away abruptly. 'I'm no fortune-teller,' I said. 'You must ask the young lady who professes to be one to answer your question. As far as I can see, one hand tells the story of the other, and that's nothing—as far as my knowledge goes.'

"I walked away. As I did so I heard Mrs. Kavanagh say to

Hoell Brinnilow, 'Have we offended him? What does he mean?'

"And Hoell answered back in my own words:

"“The story of one hand tells the story of the other.” Look at the lines in your hand and look at the lines in mine, and you will understand. He means that the end, when it comes to you, will find me ready and waiting.’ His voice sank lower, he looked at her—ah! poor fellow!—with ineffable worship and devotion shining in his eyes and irradiating his wizened little face. ‘He means that I shall live as long as you live, and die when you die. Oh,’ said Hoell, artlessly, ‘if that is my fortune, I wouldn’t exchange it for a king’s!’

“She looked back at him as indulgently as a sister might have done. She spoke, and the sudden noise of chairs being pushed back and the opening of the dining-room door prevented my hearing her reply. The drawing-room door opened at the same instant to admit a servant. The man carried a card upon a salver. He approached Philip and whispered in his ear. Philip gave a great start, looked round him in a dismayed sort of way, and hurried on the heels of the servant out of the room. I am of an inquiring disposition. I followed Philip. There was a slight bustle in the hall. The elder men had had enough of their jokes and their wine, and were trooping out of the dining-room. My brother James stood a little apart, talking to a stranger—a broad-shouldered man, in careless evening dress—a man whose features were in shadow, though his voice sounded, in an odd kind of way, as if I had heard it before. Philip stood beside the stranger, resting his hand familiarly upon his shoulder.

“‘No need for apology,’ said my brother, in his hearty, hospitable way. ‘No need—no need!’

“‘Lady Lidyard insisted on my coming,’ explained the stranger. ‘Lady Lidyard said: “You have arrived unexpectedly on a visit to my son, and my son isn’t here to receive you. I’m not going to tax your patience and my own good-temper by asking you to spend an evening alone with an old woman like me.” Her own words, I assure you! “If Mahomet isn’t here to meet the mountain, the mountain must go to Mahomet. Dine and change, and I’ll order the dog-cart to be ready to take you over to the Hall in an hour’s time. As for intrusion, stuff and rubbish! I’ll answer for your welcome when you get there.” What, under the circumstances, was I to do? I couldn’t disobey a lady—and my

hostess into the bargain. So I did as I was ordered—and here I am !

“ ‘ Philip’s friends are our friends,’ my brother responded, ‘ and Philip’s mother only did us justice in taking your welcome for granted.’ He led the way towards the drawing-room, the broad-shouldered stranger striding after him, and Philip, somewhat reluctantly, as I thought, following in the rear.

“ They encountered *me* on the way. My brother stopped, and touched me on the shoulder. ‘ Let me introduce you to a friend of Sir Philip Lidyard,’ he said, ‘ Mr.—’

“ Before the name had escaped my brother’s lips, the lamp-light falling fully upon the man’s face revealed it to me as a face I knew. It was the face of my fellow-passenger on the Russian steamer *Volga*—the man in whose company I had passed the night at the inn at Hull. Strange that chance should have thrown us together in such a way, and in the house of my fathers ! He recognized me—he held out his hand heartily enough. ‘ Aha ! we know each other already,’ he said, in the full, deep, resonant voice that I remembered. ‘ No need for an introduction *here*.’

“ We shook hands. I fell behind with Philip, as he passed. The drawing-room door opened. The pleasant laughter and social chat scarcely abated as we went in. Mrs. Kavanagh was standing where I had left her, still talking with Hoell Brinnilow.

“ My brother spoke. He said, ‘ Catherine, my dear, let me present to you an old friend of our friend Philip’s—Mr. Reginald Hawley.’

“ I saw Hoell start violently. I saw the face he turned to us grow as burning red in an instant as though the glowing reflection of a furnace had been thrown upon it. But the fierce color died out as quickly as it had flamed up, and left him sallow and quiet. I knew, as well as Philip might have known, if he had seen it, what that sudden stain meant. I recalled, word for word, the conversation I had held with Mrs. Kavanagh in the garden. I knew that the little fag of Burnham Green and his old torturer stood face to face in the persons of the crippled master of the Manor-house and Reginald Hawley. Standing as I did, behind Hawley, his face was unseen of me ; but doubtless he, too, remembered.

“ And Mrs. Kavanagh. Did she also—? My eyes went from

Hoell's face to hers. Great God! what a look I met! What passion overmastered her, what emotion paralyzed her, I could not know. I never shall know, to my dying day. But years hence I shall recall that look, and shudder at it as I did last night.

"She had grown white to the very lips. Lines, the existence of which I had never dreamed of, were marked upon her forehead and about her mouth. Her ghastly cheeks were drawn and hollow. Prematurely haggard and prematurely old, she stood before us the living wraith of the woman she had been a few moments before. Her arms hung helplessly at her sides; her eyes, large, bright, and unnaturally dilated, were fixed upon the face of Reginald Hawley.

"I stood close behind *him*. I heard him catch his breath, and mutter something to himself; I couldn't hear what it was. Very likely he was painfully surprised and confounded at finding himself an object of terror and repulsion in the eyes of a beautiful woman whom he had never seen until that moment. Is it possible that she felt Hoell's position more keenly than he did himself? Was it possible that her knowledge of the terrible wrong that had blackened the past of one of those two men, and irretrievably blighted the future of the other, was alone accountable for the strange emotion she exhibited? I can't say.

"Far less time than I have occupied in writing it down was taken up in the occurrence of the incident I have recorded here. She stood for an instant motionless, looking at Hawley; Hawley stood for an instant, looking at *her*. The hum of talk went on about us. Rosalind's laugh, responsive to some ancient gallantry of the rector's, broke out merrily and rippled through the room—a light, musical sound, the natural expression of a young girl's happy satisfaction with the world and everything in it, including herself, and in the same instant Mrs. Kavanagh's indomitable will reasserted itself. She forced herself to breathe, to think, to hear, to utter. Color came back to her cheeks, life and motion to her limbs again. Her hand did not shake or her voice falter as she bade Reginald Hawley welcome to her husband's house."

Book III.

REAPING - TIME.

CHAPTER I.

SHADOWS.

AN interval of two days had elapsed since the giving of the birthday-party at Selbrigg Hall. The reaction which, in the case of people accustomed to the uneventful course of country life, invariably follows on indulgence in the mildest orgy, had followed in due course upon the heels of the modest festivities which had celebrated Miss Rosalind Kavanagh's coming of age. The colonel had gout, and manifested that he had it by an unusual acerbity of speech and gruffness of manner. Rosalind and Philip had had a disagreement. Mrs. Kavanagh was, for once in her life, confined to her room by an obstinate attack of headache; and brown-faced, white-haired, cheery-tempered Mr. George had so far succumbed to the influence of the prevailing depression as to count up the number of pages in his Journal yet remaining to be filled, with the unacknowledged motive of ascertaining the number of days that yet remained to be spent by a vagabond in the bosom of domestic respectability. And Hoell Brinnilow? Anybody who had seen him sitting, on this sunny September afternoon, in his library chair, with uncut specimens of periodical literature lying on his table, and undusted objects of ancient and modern art dumbly reproaching him on every side for his unaccountable failure of interest in them, would have acknowledged Hoell to be out of sorts. His very lameness seemed more pronounced, and when he dragged himself out to the garden studio and sat huddled up before his easel, with his dried-up palette and unused brushes drooping from the nerveless hands that hung idly by his sides, his deformity was more painfully apparent than ever.

There was a fresh canvas upon the easel, the tattered one had been carefully hidden away; but a new and even more execrably unartistic representation of the old subject had taken its place. There was the mediæval knight who bore a grotesque likeness to Hoell. There was the mediæval lady whose form and features, traced by the hand of respectful admiration, wreaked hideous injustice, such as the most inveterate caricaturist breathing would have shrunk from wreaking, upon the personality of Mrs. Kavanagh.

"I can't paint to-day," Hoell said, despondently; "my arms and legs are numb and stupid, and my head feels heavy and dull. It's not physical weakness, it's nervous depression. Strong, muscular men, more vigorous and heartier than I am, suffer from nervous depression. Why shouldn't I? My blood doesn't circulate, my heart doesn't seem to care to beat; my system's torpid, perhaps my liver's out of order. What shall I do to wake up my system and give my liver a jog? Take a little exercise? I will."

In a corner of the studio stood a curious machine—an extraordinary combination of seat, cranks, and handles—firmly screwed down to the floor. With infinite difficulty Hoell got into the seat, leaned his crutches aside in an angle of the wall, and began to wrestle with the handles somewhat after the fashion of an unskilful rower manipulating the sculls. As in the interests of the purchaser's muscular development the handles had been made to resist as much as possible, the mere effort to move them caused Hoell to pant painfully, and brought the clammy moisture of physical weakness starting out upon his sallow, freckled skin. He persevered a little longer, and then the old weakness and irresolution mastered him again. His head drooped forward over his hands, he sighed bitterly. "Two days since I saw her—two dreary, dreary days!" he whispered to himself. "When did such a thing happen before? I can't remember." His inveterately whimsical turn of mind asserted itself even then in a feeble attempt at a joke. "I feel as they say a Chinaman does in an eclipse," he said, "as if a dragon had swallowed up *my* sun."

He extricated himself from the machine, reached his crutches from the wall, and halted out of the studio. From a knoll of rising ground, planted with low shrubs and situated in the barest

and least cultivated quarter of the garden, a tower of red brick, crude and glaring—the architectural manifestation of another outbreak of harmless eccentricity on Hoell's part—reared itself in naked hideousness towards the sky. Hoell pulled a bunch of keys from his pocket, unlocked a little door in the tower's base, half-hidden among the shrubs that grew about it, and painfully, and with many a panting stoppage for rest upon the way, climbed the tortuous iron stairs that led to the observatory. He emerged in a dusty and breathless condition on a circular platform floored with sheet lead, and bordered with a battlemented parapet, crowned with a narrow stone coping. Here stood Hoell's telescope, mounted on a stand of Hoell's own designing, and pointing steadily over the tops of the intervening trees towards the Hall. Hoell adjusted the instrument with care, Hoell looked through it long and steadily. Look as he might, his scrutiny was fruitless; not a sign of human life was stirring in the vicinity of the house, not a single object of interest crossed his field of vision. He swept the horizon to right and left with the same result, and turned away discouraged. "Not in the garden, not upon the lawn; nowhere in sight!" he muttered, drearily. "Still and sunny, lonely and desolate, a painter would call it a beautiful landscape, but there's a blight upon it in *my* eyes. It's empty of her!" He let himself slide down upon a stool, and sat huddled up in a heap, supporting his chin between his hands and staring disconsolately at the floor. "Ill," he said, "Ill yesterday and ill again to-day. What does it mean? When did such a thing happen before?" He sighed again heavily, and swayed restlessly from side to side. "Serious! It can't be anything serious," he broke out, following the course of his own anxious thoughts. "If it were anything serious, should *I* be well and strong, and hearty as I am now? It's only a headache; she sometimes has headaches, I know. *My* head aches—with worry. Oh, if I might only be near her! If I might only sit beside her and fan her as Rosalind is doing now, perhaps! My hand is as light, my touch is as gentle as a woman's; *she* once said so. If I might only bathe her head? If I might only—" He dropped his own head and closed his eyes in contemplation of the rapturous vision he had evoked.

"Master," said a voice behind him.

He started and opened his eyes. The voice of his house-

keeper had called him back to the world of commonplace reality again.

"Haven't I told you that I'm not to be followed and spied upon when I'm up here?" he said, peevishly. "Haven't I told you that I'm not to be disturbed when I'm busy with my calculations? Many an invaluable scientific discovery has been lost to the world through a man's being disturbed in his calculations! What do you want? What did you say? 'A man has just brought a message?'" He started round on his seat; he questioned the woman with feverish eagerness: "Is it a message from the Hall?"

The house-keeper shook her head, and handed him in reply the receipt-book of a railway parcels company, pointing to the blank space where it was necessary that his signature should be placed. Hoell's dim eyes brightened, his interest in mundane things revived as he read the name of the consignor of the package. He scribbled his initials on the page, and cheerfully tossed the book back to the house-keeper.

"It's a parcel from London; it comes from my tailor, and it's full of new clothes," he announced. "Give the man his book, pay the man his money, and come and help me open the parcel. You shall see the smart new things, all made in the latest fashion, and help me to try 'em on."

The gypsy-looking woman nodded sullenly and went down the stairs. Hoell twisted himself up from the stool and prepared to follow her.

"Mother Endor is showing a bit of her temper," he said. "She's thinking of the tailor's bill, not of the tailor's new clothes. She grudges me my pleasure in opening the parcel, and in wearing the things, because of the money they cost. Hang the money! I'll pinch and scrape, and make *her* pinch and scrape, till the money's paid! I can do without nice things to eat and drink, but I can't do without nice things to wear. Ladies like pretty colors and soft fine textures. Why shouldn't I make myself pleasant to look at, in one lady's eyes?" His freckled little face lost its self-complacent smile, his dismal head drooped on his breast again. "I forgot," he said. "What good are all the new clothes in the world to me when she's too ill to see me in them? Oh, dear, dear!" And hobbled down the staircase in lower spirits than ever.

CHAPTER II.

DOES SHE THINK SO?

A VISITOR'S arrival delayed the opening of the parcel, and banished the subject of the new clothes for the time being from Hoell's mind. The visitor was a white-haired, sunburned gentleman, with the genial manner and agreeable voice of Mr. George Kavanagh. He shook hands with Hoell in his hearty way; he set his mind at ease on the subject of Mrs. Kavanagh's health in a few cheery words. An attack of faintness on the night of the birthday-party had seriously alarmed the colonel and his daughter for the time being; but the local medical practitioner—who had been called in, seriously against the will of the patient—had disposed of the case as a matter of nerves.

"Nerves!" repeated Hoell, doubtfully.

"Nerves!" repeated Mr. George Kavanagh. "My sister-in-law, who is as nearly perfect as a woman can be, has proved her title to the possession of one feminine failing in common with the rest of her sex. A little doubt or uneasiness or anxiety, in your case or in my case, and we swear a little or fidget a little, and forget all about it the minute our minds are set at ease upon the matter, whatever it was, that worried us. But in the case of a woman, the effect lingers when the cause is removed. Her higher organization—"

"Stop a moment," interrupted Hoell. "You spoke of doubt and uneasiness and anxiety in connection with Mrs. Kavanagh. Strange words, in *my* ears, when I hear them coupled with her name." He hesitated. "Is there any trouble up at the Hall that an old friend like myself mustn't share?" he asked, wistfully. "'None?' Then why should she be doubtful or anxious or uneasy, of all women in the world?"

"Suppose a case in point," returned George Kavanagh. "Suppose a sensitive woman, such as my sister-in-law, unexpectedly placed in a delicate and embarrassing situation with regard to a friend whom she holds in the highest regard and esteem—?"

"Stop a minute," put in Hoell. "'A friend,' you say? Man or woman friend?"

"A man."

"Go on."

"Suppose that friend present, among other invited guests, in this lady's drawing-room, on an occasion of mild family festivity," went on Mr. George Kavanagh. "Suppose, again, the unexpected arrival upon the scene of a certain person previously unknown to the lady of the house, but—" He hesitated.

"Go on," said Hoell again.

"But who is, to her certain knowledge, associated in the mind of her old friend with events long past, but sad and painful to recall—?"

"'Sad and painful to recall,'" repeated Hoell. The light had begun to fade; the dusk of the autumn evening had closed about them as they sat. Each could distinguish the dim outline of his companion's figure, but their faces were hidden from each other.

"Suppose that lady witness of a meeting which she would gladly, knowing the effect it would undoubtedly have upon her friend, have been able to prevent," Mr. George Kavanagh continued. "Had she no cause for doubt and uneasiness and anxiety then?"

"She might have trusted to her friend," responded Hoell. "She might have known that he would give her none."

"He gave her none," returned the other. "He behaved with noble self-sacrifice and delicate consideration. He proved himself a true gentleman in spirit as well as in race. I'm an old fool," said Mr. George Kavanagh, huskily, and clearing his vision of something more obscuring than the twilight. "Perhaps I'm wrong to speak of this; but—shake hands, my boy, shake hands!"

Their hands met and gripped each other in the darkness.

"Wait a moment," said Hoell, faintly, as the other was about to leave. "Did—did Mrs. Kavanagh tell you my story, sir?"

"Mrs. Kavanagh told me the story," George Kavanagh answered.

"Tell her, then," Hoell burst out, impulsively, "that what I did that evening I did for her sake. Tell her that only to save her a moment's pain I would give up a thousand lives if I had them, in torture, without a groan! Tell her—" his voice broke and faltered. "Tell her nothing at all. I'm not myself just now," he

said. "I don't know what I'm talking about. Good-night, sir, good-night!" He went back to the shadowy room as the garden gate clicked behind the retreating figure of his visitor. "*He* thinks me noble, *he* thinks me generous," he burst out, exultingly. "Does *she* think so, too! What did I say or do? I hardly remember. There stood the great hulking brute, with his broad shoulders and his big muscles and his strong legs, and here stood crooked little me. And she stood there between us. *I* saw her turn pale, *I* saw her shiver as she looked at him. All for me, all for me, me, me! What next? *He* hulked and lowered, and *I* went forward and spoke. Says I, 'If you have forgotten the old days at Burnham Green, *I* haven't. Let me shake hands with my old school-fellow for the sake of old times.' Who looked big and who looked little *then*, I wonder, in her eyes?" He rubbed his lean little hands together, he broke into a chuckling laugh. "I'll do more still," he went on. "I have—aha! I've got a good idea! The Manor-house went to a party at the Hall the other night; it's the turn of the Hall, now, to come to a party at the Manor-house. Nothing pretentious—a bachelor's affair. High tea, with music to follow, and a little supper before the guests go away. And *she* shall sit at the head of my table and rule my house—as she rules my heart. And Mr. Reginald Hawley shall be asked, shoulders and muscles and legs and all. I was once his miserable little slave, and now my tyrant shall be my tool. *He* shall serve *my* ends as I once served *his*. He shall help without knowing it, the dull-brained, big-bodied fool, to raise me higher than ever in her esteem, to win me a place nearer to her heart than I hold now." His crutches pounded up and down the room furiously; he thought aloud, and gesticulated as he went with head and arms. "When shall my party be? To-morrow or the day after? The day after. I'll ring for Pleasant and the candles—I'll write my invitations now, to save time." He stumped gayly towards the lower end of the room where his writing-table stood; he shuffled among the papers that heaped it, in search of a little hand-bell that usually stood there; he found it and rang. As he stood looking out of the window into the dusky garden, drumming with one hand upon the table and tossing the bell idly to and fro in the other, the moon rose brightly over the jagged edge of a low, broken mass of purple-black cloud that drifted before the breeze blowing from the north-west, and the shadow of the observatory tower was

thrown obliquely across the lawn, stretching towards the house. In that moment Hoell remembered that he had neglected to replace the cover of the telescope, and reproached himself for the omission as he peered up at the brooding sky, anxiously trying to discern the signs, if any there were, of coming rain.

In the same moment he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

He had left the telescope in the position it invariably occupied: pointing in a south-easterly direction towards the Hall. It pointed now to the north-west, away over the desolate heathland, away over the lonely fields, towards the distant sea. Whose hand had shifted its position, and for what reason had the alteration been made? Had his house-keeper suddenly developed an interest in scientific pursuits? He sat down abruptly in the nearest chair in his surprise at the discovery. Pleasant Weather brought the candles into the room.

CHAPTER III.

PLEASANT WEATHER.

"COME here, Mother Endor," the cripple said, beckoning the woman to approach, without turning his head.

The house-keeper set down the candles upon the centre-table and advanced. She stood at the back of Hoell's chair; she followed with her shallow, inscrutable glance the direction of Hoell's pointing finger.

"Do you see that?" He indicated the long shadowy perpendicular of the observatory tower, and the short horizontal line of the telescope pointing the wrong way, with a double gesture of his hand. "Is that *your* doing? What tricks have you been up to now, you secret, black, and midnight hag? What were you prying at with my telescope? Is there a gypsy camp on Yelmer-ton Heath, or are the witches holding a Sabbath on the Beacon Hill? Out with it!"

Pleasant Weather vouchsafed a grim chuckle in acknowledgment of her master's pleasantries. Standing as she stood, close behind his chair, Hoell's keen ears, Hoell's sensitive perceptions, took note of her hurried breathing, and the cold, fresh scent of

dewy grass and heather that clung about her dress. He wheeled round in his seat and looked at her narrowly.

"You've been running," he said, suspiciously; "you've hardly got your breath back yet. What do you mean by gadding about the country at this time of the evening without my permission? You can't have got a sweetheart at *your* time of life?"

Pleasant chuckled again; Hoell held up an imperative finger, as she might have held up hers at him when he was a child in short frocks.

"I'm your master," he announced. "It's my business to know about all your goings and comings—it's your business to answer me when I ask you what have you been doing and where have you been?"

"Out for a breath of air," Pleasant answered, doggedly. "It's been a long day and a hot day. You didn't want me; you were talking in here to the man who comes over sometimes from the Hall—the man with the white hair."

"He's not a gentleman, then?" asked Hoell, secretly amused by this display of prejudice on Mother Endor's part.

"If it's a gentleman's business to peep and pry, and taunt a decent woman with tramp's gibberish to put her out of countenance before her inferiors—he *is* a gentleman," the woman returned. "Not else."

"Well, well," Hoell said, humoring her. "Where did you go when you went out?"

"I walked over the common and past the Beacon Hill," the woman said. "I went round by Yelmerton Shrieking Pits and then turned back." She chuckled again, in her sombre, mirthless way. "No need to go farther; I'd got what I wanted and so I came home again."

"Did you meet the Ghost of the Shrieking Pits as you went by?" demanded Hoell, with a twinkle in his eyes. "The goblin, or wraith, or fetch, or phooka, or whatever it is that wears a woman's dress and wanders about the pits at nightfall, shrieking and moaning and wringing its hands? *I've* never seen it myself, but *you* might, you know, being a bit of a witch in your own way."

The woman's white teeth showed out in her brown face, and her black eyes looked at her master with a gleam of cunning in them.

"I did see a woman nigh by the Shrieking Pits," she returned; "but if she was a ghost, master, then we're all ghosts together. No, no! The woman I saw was a woman of flesh and blood—gentlefolks' flesh and gentlefolks' blood—and stolen out after nightfall, master, like any common village girl—to meet her lover."

"Romeo and Juliet over again," commented Hoell, interestedly. "Was Juliet pretty? Never mind about Romeo—*he* was a boor, of course. Tell me whether the girl was nice to look at."

"It wasn't a girl," returned Pleasant Weather. She laughed outright this time—a coarse, jeering laugh—and swayed herself from side to side, hugging her malice, or her enjoyment, or her secret triumph, or whatever emotion it was that possessed her, to her bosom with her folded arms. "It wasn't a girl," she said. "It was a woman, master—pretty nigh as old as me. Pretty nigh! Older, master, I dare swear. Change her silks and satins for a cotton print like mine, and rub the powder off her face, and set her by me here, and even *you* wouldn't look at her a second time, much less her husband or her lover!"

"What have I got to do with her, you old raven?" returned Hoell. "Middle-aged and married, and with a lover! She ought to be ashamed of herself. In the good old days, when ladies of that sort were brought before the magistrate and the squire for punishment, the punishment they got was a ducking in the village pond, and an hour or two's sitting in the village stocks, where all the village folks might pelt and stare at 'em. The stocks are standing yet, though the old laws aren't. Let your Jezebel of the Shrieking Pits keep out of *my* way, or I may be tempted to revive an interesting custom and make a moral example at the same time."

He laughed in the enjoyment of his own humor, and Pleasant Weather joined in. Some secret sense of the ludicrous, some sinister meaning that was not *his*, added to her appreciation of the joke.

"Laugh, master, laugh!" she cried, clapping her hands together. "It's good to see you. Ha! ha! master! Ha! ha! In the stocks, master, with all the people jeering and pointing? Go on laughing, master—it does me good to hear you—it does me good to see you. Better laugh at a woman, master, than cry about her, any day in the year!"

Hoell suddenly recovered his gravity, hoisted himself upright on his crutches, caught his house-keeper by the arm, and twisted her unceremoniously towards the light. "It seems to me that you have been drinking, Mother Endor," he said, coolly. "Some of my French brandy—or some of your own herb-tea? Which-ever it was, it has got into your head. Let me recommend you to get it out again as quickly as you can, Endor, because I want to consult you about my party—did I say that I had made up my mind to give a party here on the night after to-morrow night? Ladies are coming, and everything has got to be done in first-rate style in honor of those ladies. Do you hear?"

"I hear," said Pleasant Weather. "Is the lady up at the Hall—is Mrs. Kavanagh one of the ladies who are to be done honor to, master, on the night after to-morrow night?"

She put this harmless question to her master in such an extraordinary tone of voice—she levelled at him as she spoke so strange a look out of her shallow, glittering black eyes—that Hoell, at a loss for any other explanation of his house-keeper's conduct, was forced to revert, seriously this time, to the idea of her being under the influence of liquor. "She *has* been drinking," he muttered to himself, as he dropped her arm and turned away. "Odd, I never knew her to do it before."

"Aye, have I been drinking," returned the woman. "Every penny of wages you pays me goes for the strong stuff. Not a drop ever passes my lips but what I gets that way; so you may guess to a teaspoonful how much I drink, my darling."

"You mean," retorted Hoell, in high good-humor, "that I don't pay you any wages, you jade. Because I haven't the money to give you, for one thing, and you wouldn't take it if I had, for another? Eh, Mother Endor, eh?"

He patted the house-keeper's shoulder gently, his sharp white teeth shining in the smile that robbed his sallow face of its plainness and brought into his keen eyes a softer light. The hard lines about Pleasant Weather's mouth relaxed; she changed and mellowed into a different creature, under the influence of the kindly touch and the kindly tone. But as Hoell's hand, having bestowed the slight caress, dropped indifferently away—as Hoell turned his back upon her, and ensconced himself in the luxurious depths of his stuffed and padded easy-chair—the old look and the old manner came back again.

"Ah, that's the way!" she whispered, in the depths of her resentful heart. "A touch, such as he might give to a village brat, a kind word such as he might throw to a stray cur, and what am I? Nothing! But once, master, it was different. Pleasant, who fostered you when you were a wailing baby—Pleasant, who nursed you back from death to life—Pleasant, who watched and tended you, sickly lad and ailing man—she was all to you, as you to her, in the old days. Good days those were to live in, master, but they're gone, never to come back no more, and Pleasant knows who she has got to thank for it."

"It's time I had my supper," proclaimed the unconscious object of her unspoken thoughts. "It's been a long day and a dreary day. I want to go to bed and get it over, as I used when I was six years old. What are you waiting for? I haven't answered your question? I haven't told you who the ladies are who are coming to grace and beautify my poor abode on the night after to-morrow night? Do I visit any other ladies than the ladies up at the Hall? No? Are any ladies likely to visit *me* than Mrs. Kavanagh and her daughter? Get me my supper while I'm in the mind for it, or I shall go to bed without."

Despite this threat, the house-keeper lingered. "Miss Rosalind Kavanagh is a well-looking young lady, in most people's opinions?" she interrogated, obstinately harking back to the ladies up at the Hall.

"Most people are to be congratulated upon their discrimination," snapped Hoell. "Call the Venus of Milo a comely young woman, and suppose Helen of Troy to have been, on the whole, a presentable sort of body, and then you'll have an excuse for applying the epithet 'well-looking' to Miss Rosalind Kavanagh."

"I don't know anything about Venus or the other one," answered the woman, doggedly; "they're nothing to me—or to you. You're not sweet on either; you're not breaking your heart about one or the other of *them*, my darling!"

He made her no response in words. Standing where she stood, his face was hidden from her. But as she uttered those last words she saw him wince and shrink as though some sharper bodily pang than usual had seized him, and the veins upon his thin hands start into prominence as he tightened his grasp upon the elbows of his chair.

"What maggot have you got into your head this time, Mother

Endor?" he said, with the ghost of his old whimsical manner, and the ghost of his old mocking tone. "What mare's-nest have you hunted up now—with an addled egg in it? Come, I'm in a good-humor to-night; I'll please you, and amuse myself by falling in with the joke, and making believe, as the children say. Suppose I am breaking my heart about a lady, what then?—and how the devil did *you* come to find it out?"

"I have eyes, my darling. I have ears. I wasn't always old and ugly, as I am now. Brown as I was, I was handsome enough when I was young. I have seen men dying of love in my time," said Pleasant Weather, "and dying of love for me!" She stepped round in front of Hoell's chair, and fixed her glittering black eyes on his; she pointed at him with one lean, brown finger, and gesticulated with the mien and air of a pythoness, as she continued: "Not only common men, look you, my darling! gentlefolks, with good blood running in their veins, as good as ran in your own father's, and good money jingling in their pockets, as good as ever he spent or gave away. My wish and spell I put upon 'em, one and all, because the sport of seeing the soft looks they cast, and hearing the fine words they said, and making 'em hate one another, for my sake, was noble sport to me. And when a woman puts her wish and spell upon a man, master, she draws the light out of his eyes, and the soul out of his breast, and the blood out of his veins, little by little, into her own; and the wearier he do grow, the gayer she, and the heavier and slower *his* step, the lighter hers; 'cause it's meat and drink to her, Gentile or gypsy, and silver and gold, to see him suffer, and to know the reason why." She struck her hands together passionately. "Have I seen the like of this happen so often that I don't know the signs of it now? When I see you sit and sit, thinking and thinking, my darling, and sometimes smile and sometimes sigh, or stretch your poor hand out—*so*—as if 'twas to be touching a cheek or hand you dreamed was nigh and by, am I no wiser than I was before? When I see you painting your pictures, or making your calculations, master, that you're not to be disturbed over—when I lie awake o' nights, and hear your crutches thump, thump, thumping up and down—"

She stopped abruptly. For Hoell was lying luxuriously back in his comfortable cushioned chair, with a smile of rapturous enjoyment on his wizened little face, and beatific wrinkles pucker-

ing the corners of his closed eyelids. "Go on, go on!" he said, dreamily. "When you hear me walking up and down, night after night, what do you think? What do you say? Do you say to yourself: 'My master's in love?'" He opened his eyes and closed them again, and heaved a sigh of unutterable contentment, like a child's. "In love" he repeated. "In love. Oh, the beautiful word—the soft, delicious word! Say it as I say it. 'My master's in love!'"

"'My master's in love,'" repeated Pleasant Weather. "And who's Miss Rosalind Kavanagh that my master should weary his life out because of her? What's Miss Rosalind Kavanagh that my master should spend dreary days and restless nights along of such as she?"

Hoell opened his eyes suddenly and sat upright. He looked at Pleasant Weather, and then turned his face away from the light, towards the most sombre corner of the room. He partly shaded it with his hand, as he laughed to himself cunningly and quietly, and with such intense enjoyment of the house-keeper's mistake that he was forced to control his twitching lips with his fingers as he looked at her again. "So it's Miss Rosalind Kavanagh I'm dying for?" he said. "Mother Endor's right; there is no keeping a secret from her! And I'm letting the worm Concealment prey upon my damask cheek, because I'm afraid that, being a lively young lady, as well as a charming young lady, who only celebrated her nineteenth birthday the other day, that she wouldn't have me if I asked her. Is that it?"

"She not have you?" the house-keeper repeated, contemptuously. "I know better, master, I know better. Why? Because I'm a female myself, Christianly speaking, and I don't look at a young girl in the outrageous way of mankind. Because she hangs high up, looking ripe and modest and rosy-cheeked, says you in your foolishness—for which who shall blame you, being born to it—'Out of reach. Not for me!' and looks as blank as an empty hen-roost. But shake the tree, master, ever so little, and ten to one on it but she tumbles, plump! into your mouth, ready to melt away upon your lips with pure longing, for all her bashful looks. Take comfort, deary!" she went on, losing sight of her jealousy in her eagerness to repudiate her master's implied slight upon his own powers of fascination.

"She's for you, as much as any other woman in the world, if you have a mind to her."

All the pitiable vanity inherent in Hoell's nature rose smirkingly to the surface as he listened to the house-keeper's words. He basked in her coarse flattery as complacently as he had revelled in her mistaken suspicions of a moment ago. "So you think I've got as good a chance of winning a rich young beauty for my wife as the biggest and most muscular man alive? So you think I'm not to be resisted when I lay siege to Miss Rosalind Kavanagh's affections? You good creature! You're too partial, Weather, you're too partial. Besides, somebody else has been before me. There's another lover in the orchard already, to follow out your simile. He has got a stronger arm than I have to shake the tree with, and a bigger mouth to catch the pear in when it comes down. Oh, dear, dear! And so, though I should like to stand in the bridegroom's shoes, Mother Endor, I shall have to content myself with those of the best man, unless I am very much mistaken."

The levity, the mockery of his tone, were lost upon the house-keeper's earnestness as rain is lost and leaves no trace behind in falling upon the sea. She bent over the back of his chair and put her lips close to his ear. "Tell us the other one's name, master, tell us who's the lucky lover, the bridegroom that's to be!" Hoell looked hard at her with simulated melancholy, and shook his sandy little head in affected reproach.

"Young or old, the women are all alike. Let them but scent a marriage and away they go in full cry. Off with you to Sir Philip Lidyards wedding, like the rest of the pack, Mother Endor. On second thoughts I won't be best man. I should have to return thanks for the ladies at the wedding-breakfast, and in the probable state of my feelings on that occasion I wouldn't answer for what might happen. I'll stay at home and wear the willow, Endor. I'm not at all sure that I sha'n't hang, or drown, or shoot myself, unless something happens between this and the wedding-day." He put his handkerchief to his face and moaned, and twinkled at her whimsically from behind it with his little sandy-brown eyes. But the sense of humor in the house-keeper's organization was a sense left out. The poor pretence, the transparent affectation of despondency that might hardly have deceived a child, deceived *her*.

"Heart up, master," she said. "Strange things come to pass; there's no knowing but something might happen between this and the wedding-day."

"The lovers might quarrel," suggested Hoell, pursuing the feeble joke with the pertinacity that was his prevailing characteristic. "She might get tired of him and tell him so, or he might die. Who knows?"

"Right," cried Pleasant Weather. "Never say die, master, because he might. Younger, stronger, stouter men than him drop off day by day. And then comes you along in your beautiful coat, with a flower in your button-hole, and your handkerchief smelling of scent, looking this way and that for a wife. 'I can show you how to comfort a girl for her dead sweetheart,' says you to her folk; 'give her a live one instead! Take me!'" She clapped her hands together as she spoke, and burst into another peal of mirthless laughter.

"Take me," repeated Hoell. "All very well; but the old gentleman with the scythe has got to take the other one before I can say that—and our friend at the Chase comes of a long-lived stock, Mother Endor."

"Shall I tell you a story, master?" said Pleasant. "Come, you said you were in a good-humor a little while ago. When you were in a good-humor in the old days you used to creep to my knee, that you scarcely reached to, standing upright, and beg for one. Listen to my story, darling; it'll not take long."

"You're madder than usual to-night, Endor," returned Hoell; "but as you've set your mind on it, you may tell your story, provided it lasts no longer than the cigarette I'm going to smoke." He took a cigarette from a gayly-embroidered case and lighted it at a spill the house-keeper held for him. As the end of the little paper tube glowed crimson in response to his indrawn breath—as the first spiral wreath of fragrant blue vapor ascended, Pleasant Weather began her story.

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASANT TELLS A STORY.

“MY story, master, begins when I was little, and lived in a cottage at the village end with my mother. My father I seldom saw. He was head game-keeper at the Chase, and I misremember his name by now, as I always went by my mother’s. A Cooper she was, and came of certain folk who walk about among the northern counties, and who never forgave her for running away with my father; nor did she forgive him for luring her into taking up with him, and learning of him to read and write, which are arts abominated by the Romanies; and afterwards marrying of him Christianly. So he went his way, finding the house too hot to hold him after the love-fit had passed off, and she would have gone to her people, but they would have none of her. So she stayed in the village, and kept herself and me by her own earnings, for of my father’s money she would not take. Skewers she made, and baskets; and what with telling fortunes on the sly—for she had a rare gift that way—and knowing the uses of herbs in curing complaints in men and beasts, we wanted for nothing.

“Now about the time my father died—for he was found dead and swollen in his game-keeper’s lodge one morning, having eaten something in a stew of mushrooms which had disagreed with him—I was growing tall and strong, and a true Cooper in temper as well as in looks, ‘which is well for you, daughter,’ my bebee said—for she had taught me to speak to her after the manner of her people—‘or you should have gone packing to your Gentile of a father long ago.’ And I began to pry about, and to put this and that together; for it seemed to me it would be a grand thing to know as much as my mother knew, and to be feared as she was feared by the ignorant people round us. But she would tell me little, if anything, and bade me be content with the knowledge I had, in the way of skewer and basket making; for though I had the look of her people, and the temper of her people, I had blood running through my veins that was not theirs, and it was not fit

that I should learn their secrets. But I made up my mind to have my will sooner or later.

“There was a mill standing where a heap of ruins stands now, master, about a mile from Ketton Village; and the miller’s wife was a buxom young woman and high-spirited, and she had married the miller for money, not love—he being a gray-headed man who had buried a wife already—and as time flowed on he got to know this and taunted her with it, and other things besides; for his foreman had courted her before marriage, and ’twas said there was more kindness between ’em still than should be between married wife and bachelor.

“And one late noon in autumn, when the leaves were falling and the setting sun burned behind naked branches like a raging fire, a knock came at our door and, lo! the miller’s wife followed close upon it. ‘You don’t know me,’ she says to my bebee. ‘Make not too sure of that,’ my bebee says. ‘I knows more than I gets credit for.’ ‘So I hear, or should I stand where I do now? Send the girl away’—that was me, my darling—‘and let me speak to you.’ They sends the girl into the sleeping-room beyond, but she claps her ear to a crack in the door and listens. When I hears as how the miller’s foreman be down-lying with a fever prevailing in these parts of damp seasons, and as how the doctor had given him up. And ‘I can’t let him die,’ says the miller’s wife. ‘Simples are of use sometimes when doctors’ drugs fail. Help me—help him, for the love of God, and you shall be better paid than ever you were in your life before.’ ‘For the love of the good money I’ll do what I may,’ my bebee says. ‘Go you away now, and come at this time to-morrow.’ And she goes. Then my bebee opens the door of the sleeping-room and calls to me, and I gets her shawl, and takes a fork and a basket according to her directions, and we goes out together. And as we goes—for her eyes were not as good as they used to be—which came of living between four brick walls, which no true daughter of the Egyptians was ever meant to do, and breathing air that was only fit for Christians to swallow, as she used to say—she tells me what to look for, and where ’tis most likely to be found growing. And I says to myself, ‘This is the beginning.’ And on a bit of wild waste land, a mile or two from the sea, after a deal of seeking, ’tis found, sure enough. And I digs it up with my fork, careful, so as not to bleed the root, which is for all the world like a parsnip,

and the leaf as resembling to wild chiccory as may be. And we sets our faces homeward, and when I has my supper to bed I must go. But my bebee sits over the fire all night long and watches a pot upon the simmer. And in the morning, before she touches bit or sup, it is 'Child, find me a bottle—thick glass, and of a dark color, or it is no good at all.' And I begs one from a neighbor, not saying but 'tis to hold hartshorn, or such like, for my bebee's rheumatism. And when the dark-blue bottle is washed and rinsed, 'tis 'Child, run and fetch in some taters from the garden;' and when I comes back with the taters the saucepan is gone, and leaves, and whatnot, together with the cloth that was used to strain the liquor, are burning on the fire; and the blue-glass bottle, filled and corked up tightly, stands on the table, shining in the sun. At that my curiosity burns up brightly, and 'What do you call it, bebee?' I says; 'and what is it good for?' meaning the medicine. 'I calls it Life-and-Death, Kill-and-Cure,' my bebee answers; 'and it's good for either.'

"That night the miller's wife comes, and she takes away with her, in a pint jug tightly tied over with a cloth, some oaten grit-water of my bebee's making. The charm that was said over it makes it different to other sick drinks of the kind; and 'tis to be taken, little by little, hour by hour, till the fever 'bates, which it must do by nightfall of the next day or the miller's foreman is marked for a dead man. And the miller's wife takes the grit-water, and pays my bebee in silver, and goes her ways. And the blue-glass bottle is hidden away, but some part of the stuff it holds has been mixed with the drink meant for the sick man, I knows full well. And, sure enough, by nightfall of the next day he is out of danger, and scarcely a fortnight goes by before he is at work again in his old place at the mill.

"But from that day thenceforth 'tis cast about the village, here and there, that the miller and his young wife agree worse than ever, and that from hard words it has come to hard blows more than once between 'em. But little enough we cares about village gossip, having enough to do with our own affairs, my bebee and I. Till late one evening in winter-time, between the lights, a woman wrapped in a shawl walks in without any preamble, and says to my bebee, 'Send the girl to bed—I want to speak to you.' Remembering the voice for that of the miller's wife, though the face, of which I catches a glimpse between the

folds of the shawl, might well have passed for a stranger's, by reason of its whiteness and the strange look in the eyes, even without the mark of a disfiguring bruise upon the cheek, I goes as far as the other side of the door, master, and no farther. But as for what was said, I heard nothing of it but a whisper here and a whisper there of risk and danger on my bebee's part, and of pleading and bribery on that of the miller's wife. Then, having previously slipped my clothes off, and hearing my bebee coming, I whips into bed and am asleep sounder than a hedgehog when she comes in. So cunning I lies, and subdues my countenance, that the candle-flame, passing over my very eyelids, never brings as much as a quiver into them, and my bebee goes to a hiding-hole I had never found out before, made like a little drawer in the head of the wooden bed-frame, and takes out something that gleams blue in the candle-light, and goes back to the miller's wife. A gurgling then I hears, as of liquid pouring into another bottle, and a chinking of money; presently the door opens and shuts, and my bebee comes to bed, and when the bottle of Life-and-Death goes back to the hiding-hole, it lies in a rich nest of golden sovereigns, new from the mint.

"And behold you! the next sun as ever sets upon us brings strange news. The miller has died all of a sudden in a fit of giddiness brought on by heating his blood overmuch in a passage of high words with his wife. Coroner's inquest and doctor's certificates proves no more and comes to no less; and in six months the miller's widow marries the smart young foreman, and a silver teapot stands on the shelf of my bebee's cupboard; and hangs on the hook in the press a purple-satin gown, fit wearing for the wife of Pharaoh. What do you think of my story, master?"

"What do I think of the story? I think," said Hoell, throwing away the stump of the smoked-out cigarette, "that your miller's wife was a murderous hussy, and deserves to have her portrait handed down to posterity in my collection." He waved his hand towards the velvet case of miniatures hanging on the wall. "And I think that your mother died in the wrong place, supposing her to have died in her bed—"

"Which she did," the house-keeper interrupted. "Her sticks and bits of things came to me when she was gone, and by your father's leave I housed 'em here, having shifted my quarters

from the little homing-place to the great dwelling some years before, finding a high roof the more agreeable shelter for my pride—I was proud in those days! Some of the things I keeps about me to this day. I sleep on the bedstead that my bebee slept on, every night. I shall die on it as she did, I suppose, when my time comes.”

“Haven’t we got to the end of the story, Hecate?”

“Patience a moment longer, master, and I’m done. You’ve not asked me whether I found anything in the hiding-hole in the bed of my old bebee’s bed-frame after she was put away. Yet I did find something there. Can you guess what it was?”

“Money that your old magpie of a mother had hidden away?” Hoell suggested, with an evident lack of interest in the subject.

“Money, and more than money,” said Pleasant Weather. “A blue-glass bottle, empty and dry, and with it a paper, written in a language I understood. My bebee must have been doubtful that her memory might fail her one day, and so wrote down in ‘Gyptian words, if spelled with Gentile letters, the secret way of making more of the good stuff to fill it with when needful. The secret that put life and death into my hands, master. Life for any one I loved, supposing him to be taken as the miller’s foreman was taken. Death for any one that should stand in my way, or *his* (as the miller stood in the way of his wife), to court revenge or to threaten danger, or to baulk him of his wish. My story is ended, master. *Now* do you know why I have told it to you?”

“You hag!” burst out Hoell, as the woman’s intensely black eyes, their shallow, glossy surface broken by shifting, evil lights, confronted and held his own, as her lean, brown hand closed upon his sleeve, and her cold breath fluttered at his ear, “I believe I do!” He pushed her away from him, and surveyed her with a glance in which disgust was mingled with a cynical amusement. “Your idea of humor is a peculiar one, Mrs. Weather. I’ve heard you say some queer things before this when you were in one of your bedlam moods. But you’re not joking now. You’re in earnest—in dangerous, unpleasant earnest. You’re not to be trusted, ma’am, and in case you should be taking it into your head to try any experiments on your own account or on mine, with that precious family prescription of

yours, go and fetch it. Go and fetch the paper you've been hoarding. I'll see that it's put in a safe place for keeping. Go and fetch it, do you hear?"

"Don't take it from me, master!"

"Go and fetch it!"

"Let me keep it by me, darling, for the sake of the old days when it was my only comfort. Sat beside your bedside, I did, night and day, day and night, and listened to you a-groaning. And when the pain was less cruel to bear and you able for talking a bit, it would be: 'My own darling, tell me again. What was he like, the boy who did it?' Says you: 'Tall and stout and heavy, with red hair and a fresh color, and the other boys called him Butcher.' Then I creeps away and has a peep at—you know what. Thinks I, 'There's one a-walking the earth now that you shall help me to be revenged on one of these here days.' 'Tall and stout and heavy, red-haired, and known by the name of Butcher.' Something tells me—something that never erred before—that though his way and mine lies far apart, they're bound to meet at last. Much land he shall travel and much water cross, high fortune and poor luck attend him, turn and turn about, but the thread that guides him shall draw him back to me before the end. There's no hope, no help for it! And from time to time, as the years ran by, I puts the same question to you: 'What was he like, the boy—now the man—who did it?' And you always makes me the same answer, till one time—about a year after the new mistress came to the Hall—it comes different. 'Dead. Died abroad, over seas, and speak you his name to me never no more. For my anger and bitter remembrance of the injury he did me lies buried in his grave.'"

"'For my anger and bitter remembrance of the injury he did me lie buried in his grave,' repeated Hoell. "Well, let them rest there. Go and fetch the paper."

"If I must I must, I suppose. You're quite sure *he's* dead, darling?"

"As sure as I am that I'm in love with the young lady up at the Hall."

"Strange! I've had a feeling on me lately as if something were drawing nigher and nigher to me (some one—who, I don't know) every day. I've sat up in my bed o' nights and listened, for it seems as if the footsteps were coming so close to

me that I must hear them ere long. 'Keep off,' I says, 'for your own sake! What grudge do I owe you, stranger as you be?' But they keep on coming nearer, and no warning from my lips or any other's 'll turn 'em aside. They're coming now, master, on to their appointed end, and what that is who shall say? Don't frown and bite your lips; I'm going to fetch the paper."

She brought the hoarded scrap after the absence of some minutes, and Hoell took it, with a grimace of fastidious disgust at its age and griminess, twisted it deliberately spill-wise, and motioned her to bring one of the candles from the table to his side.

"Are you going to burn the paper, darling?"

"I told you I would put it in a safe place, Mother Endor, and I'm carrying out my word. The back of the fire-grate—supposing the fire to be lighted—is the best strong-box for documents of this kind. It flares, now I've set fire to it, and sputters. That comes of the gallows-grease it has been smeared with. Now the sparks, like impudent little devils, fly up the chimney, one after another: Cob, Mob, Chittabob, and the rest of 'em, treading on each other's tails. Nothing but ashes left, you see."

"Nothing but ashes. Let it go; there are other ways to help you to your wish than that way, master; other secrets than my old bebee's secret, to be made use of when the time comes. I found one out yonder by the Shrieking Pits to-night—one that may be buried but can't be burned. Hides it in my bosom, I does, and brings it home, not knowing but 'twill be like to come in handy one day. For husband's honor is a keen blade in hands that are cunning to use it, and so is lover's faith, and so is daughter's love; but the sharpest weapon of all is a wife's sin. Shall I tell you what I know about her?"

"What you know about her, darling?"

"Aye! what I know about the mistress up at the Hall. What? You're ready to listen now, are you?"

She bent over her master and whispered a few sentences rapidly in his ear. Short as the communication was, it had a terrible effect upon the crippled man. His face changed—became distorted—the very hair seemed to rise upon his head under the influence of the unconquerable rage that seized him. He uttered an inarticulate sound, like the cry of some wild beast, and struck at the woman furiously with his crutch.

"Liar, liar, liar!" The clammy sweat-drops that broke out upon his sallow temples, the foam that started on his lips, showed the violence of the passion that strove in him for utterance.

"By my God, master, it is true! May I die a starving dog's death, a rotting sheep's death, if it ben't as I say! And, being so, your knowing of it puts power in your hands. 'Favor my cause with the girl,' says you, 'without much beating about the bush, or down to the dust with you and your pride?' Strike me, if you like, darling. You'll work off your passion so. A blow wouldn't hurt, not to speak of, coming from your hand."

"Out of my sight or I shall murder you! Lock the doors and send everybody to bed. Let no one come near me to-night; I want to be alone—I want to think. Oh, my heart! my heart!"

The wind had risen and clamored loudly round the house, setting the branches of the tall yews, standing like sentinels on either side of the old-fashioned casements that lighted the upper end of the room, tapping like muffled fingers against the glass. A vagrant gust made its way down the chimney, setting the candles guttering and flaring, and stirring the trail of ashes that remained upon the clean, white tiles of the fireless hearth with a sound like the rustling of a woman's gown. Huddled up in his arm-chair he sat the whole night through—in the numbness of the blow that had fallen on him—and never stirred, except to clasp his head about with his hands or to wring them one in another against his breast, or made sound, except from time to time in a low, pitiful moaning. So, in his misery, the morning found him—of all desolate creatures that the brave sun rose upon surely the most desolate and the most forlorn.

CHAPTER V.

AT THE HALL.

WHEN two young people of opposite sexes, who are accustomed to breathe the calm, unemotional atmosphere of English country life, and who have acknowledgedly found in the mutual interchange of thoughts and opinions, not always consonant or identical, the main interest and excitement of their lives—when such

a He and such a She have quarrelled in good earnest and are reduced to contemplation of an existence in the present and future, to be conducted under distant and separate conditions—then does Dulness expand her sable wings over the head of each young solitary and claim them for her own: walking step by step with them in measured paces, hanging leaden weights upon the cogwheels of time, and sprinkling showers of megrims and vapors round her, like London smuts, until Dignity is fain to gather up her starched skirts and depart, leaving the ears of the estranged couple free to hearken and hearts to respond to the whisper of the grimly-visaged mediatress, inculcating the advisability of a speedy making-up.

“But I never will,” Miss Rosalind Kavanagh had repeated on the afternoon of the second day’s estrangement. And when a young lady makes up her mind that she never will she immediately manifests a certain anxiety to test her adamant resolve to the utmost, by bringing it without delay into contact with softening influences emanating from the other side.

Therefore, when wheels were heard grinding upon the gravel before the hall door, it was but in the ordinary course of things that Miss Kavanagh should be discovered on the point of issuing forth, in apparent if not obtrusively high spirits, for a morning stroll, with a new novel and a sunshade. But the dog-cart proved to be a vehicle belonging to the Hall, and its driver merely a groom who had been sent over to the neighboring seaport-town to execute some commissions for his mistress. Whereupon the idea of an airing was abandoned with the sunshade, and the newest and loveliest of garden-hats ever conceived and executed by a London milliner; the new novel was left sprawling on its stomach upon one of the tables in the hall, and Rosalind turned her footsteps towards her step-mother’s room.

But that proved refuge from solitude or weariness was not to be hers to-day; the solace of sympathy and love never before denied her was to be denied her now. As she raised her hand to knock at the door another hand was laid upon her arm. An elderly maid, Mrs. Kavanagh’s faithful attendant from the earliest days of her marriage up to the present, who had been keeping watch in the corridor for the purpose of warning off would-be intruders, confronted her young lady with an anxious face, and elevated a cautioning finger.

"My mistress gave particular orders that she was not to be disturbed, miss. My mistress has had a bad night with her head, and seemed quite worn-out this morning. I was to say so, with her love, and that you and the master were not to be alarmed, for rest and quiet was all she wanted to make her quite well by dinner-time. And most particular the orders were that she was not to be disturbed."

Too full of affectionate anxiety to regard the woman's warning, Rosalind knocked at the bedroom door and tried the handle. The door was locked. She listened. The flapping of a curtain in the draught of an open window might simulate to some extent the sound of draperies trailing over the carpet, but not the sound of unquiet feet pacing to and fro.

"She is not lying down, Martin; I hear her moving about. There can be no harm in my seeing and speaking to her only for a moment. Mamma, darling, it is only Rosalind. May I not come in?"

The sound of trailing draperies, the tread of unquiet feet, never ceased, but a voice, strangely unlike Mrs. Kavanagh's, answered from within, "No!"

"Then let me see you—just a glimpse to make sure you are not really ill!"

The hoarse voice answered "No; I want to be by myself—I want rest and quiet. Go out into the bright sunshine, my love, and be happy. Don't think of me!"

CHAPTER VI.

"WHEN LOVE IS YOUNG."

THE draperies swept over the carpet once more, the footsteps were heard again—plainly as they passed the door of the bedroom, growing fainter as they retreated into the morning-room beyond it. That room possessed a door opening into the corridor as well as one leading into the drawing-room. Both those doors were locked, and double-locked, as the grieved daughter turned silently away.

"I told you so," the elderly maid's expression said as plainly

as if she had spoken in words. She shook her head and resumed her watch in the corridor. Rosalind returned to the hall, took up her neglected novel, and tried to read.

It was a circulating library novel in three volumes, beautifully bound, and the plot dealt exclusively with a misunderstanding between an engaged couple, who parted defiantly in the first chapter and were penitentially united in the last—not in time to prevent the lady's hair from being turned prematurely white by, as the author phrased it, "the smiting hand of grief." A sad story, and by the time Rosalind had skipped as far as *Finis*, and dropped a tear or two over the sufferings of the heroine, the sound of the luncheon-gong came as a positive relief.

Neither her father or her uncle made their appearance at the meal. The colonel, in the exercise of his functions as a magistrate, had ridden over to attend the quarterly sessions held in the neighboring city of Norwich; his brother had volunteered to accompany him the greater part of the way. Rosalind found herself, for the first time in her life, sole occupant of the family table. Was it possible, even for a healthy young English lady, to manifest, under such circumstances, the fine appetite which is the national attribute of her countrywomen in the opinion of the intelligent foreigner? No! The butler, an old servant, and a family man into the bargain, observed the miserable pretence his young mistress made of eating, and felt it his duty to expostulate. He brought back a favorite dish which she had sent away almost untasted, and begged her, for the sake of his credit with the cook (whose temper, he parenthetically observed, was a stinger), to try again. The second attempt was as ineffectual as the first. Rosalind left the table and went out of the house.

A bright-eyed collie was sitting on his haunches before the hall door. He rose, flamboyant with expectation, and barked anticipatively as Rosalind appeared. A silky mop of hair, coiled up in the sun a little distance off, woke up and shook out an hysterically-yelping skye-terrier. An unregenerate black poodle, sorrowfully in want of clipping, and a half-bred foxhound left off digging a hole under a tree a little distance off, and contributed their quota of noise to the general chorus; while two white Persian cats—who had been watching the progress of excavation in the interests of any field-mouse or beetle who might

happen to have settled in the neighborhood—and a clip-winged tame magpie, who had been keeping his eye on the cats, for malevolent reasons of his own—came paddling and fluttering over the lawn to take up their accustomed positions on the outskirts of the canine circle.

"Oh, not to-day, Jock," Rosalind said sadly to the collie, who, with his feathery tan fore-paws laid upon her arm, and his sagacious head cocked upon one side, looked past her into the empty hall with a low whine of inquiry; "we must go for our walk without her to-day." She moved slowly on; the dogs scampered forward, yelping joyfully, the cats prepared to follow more sedately, while the magpie announced his intention of accompanying them in a series of sharp preliminary prods. The cortege proceeded a little way, then halted in disorder. It became apparent that something was wrong.

A dismal sound came from the direction of the house. Rosalind looked back and called to the collie. He acknowledged the invitation with a faint wag of his tail, and slunk back to his old place, a thoroughly miserable dog. With down-drooped ears and uplifted nose he sat before the hall door and protested against the particular dispensation of Fate which had prevented his mistress from taking her usual morning walk, in a series of melancholy howls.

The other dogs wavered, suddenly lost all interest in the projected expedition, and turned back. The cats held a short consultation, which ended in their retracing their steps. The magpie followed them, on evil thoughts intent. Miss Kavanagh found herself alone. "Even the animals desert me," she said to herself, and the next moment showed her the primal deserter (biped) striding across the grass. She received him so frigidly that a third person and a keen observer would have suspected the dissembling of warmer sentiments; but Sir Philip Lidyard, being a single-visioned as well as a single-hearted young Saxon, was visibly chilled and depressed.

"How kind of you to call. Unfortunately, mamma is ill; this is the second day she has kept her room, and I fear you will be disappointed at not seeing her."

"Disappointed, certainly, and grieved to hear such news of her. But the fact is my visit was intended—I came to see yourself in particular."

"Delighted! But how could you desert your friend Mr. Hawley?"

"My friend Hawley has gone for a walk. Wanted to renew his acquaintance with the scenery of his native country. I offered him the dog-cart, but he refused it; his legs wanted stretching, he said. So off he went; and on that, my anxiety—"

"To kill time?"

"To see you and set my mind at rest after two days—"

"Spent in more congenial society?"

"Sent me whirring over here like a carrier-pigeon. Said I to myself, 'She would not say "good-night" to me the other night. Perhaps she may not entertain the same objection to saying "good-afternoon" this afternoon.'"

"'Good-afternoon,' then."

"What! would you send me away when I have only just come? Ah, you like to make a poor fellow wretched. I do believe women are more cruel than men. Come, tell me how I have offended you—without knowing it, dear Rosalind? Ah, you draw yourself up at that, and yet it used to be Rosalind, and Linda, and Rose—sweet Rose—not so very long ago, when we were boy and girl in Eton jackets and short frocks together."

"A curious costume. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Laugh at me afterwards as much as you like, only explain now. Why am I in disgrace?"

"How can I tell?"

"You are cold to me—you are angry with me—and I will know why."

"Don't grind your teeth and stamp your foot; it is not becoming. Well, then, I will tell you. When a gentleman happens to be in the right and a lady in the wrong—for once—it is not nice to triumph over her."

"When were you ever in the wrong?"

She was soothed by that, and proceeded more mellifluously. "The other day—it seems longer ago—I was unreasonable, obstinate, and ill-tempered—"

"No, no!"

"Indeed, it is true, and you the reverse of all these things, only acting delicately and thoughtfully and considerately towards poor Mr. Brinnilow in trying to prevent a meeting between him

and your friend. And when the meeting did take place after all—through no fault of yours—then I knew that you had been in the right and I in the wrong; and that you thought so I could read in your eyes, for the eyes are the index of the mind and the heart, as somebody says."

"Somebody says wrong, if that is all you read in mine."

"I resolved to beg your pardon, for I knew I had behaved ill; but then you looked as if you knew it, too, and that made a difference. For a girl will be truly penitent, and call herself dreadful things, until she finds that—other people—agree with her, and then she begins to remember the excuses that might have been made for her, and to think herself not so very much to blame after all."

"Nor were you, for I did not confide in you as I ought to have done. But I could not bear to prejudice you against my friend, and—"

"I *was* very disagreeable."

"You said one or two things that hurt at the time, but do you think I would remember them against you? As well owe a dove a grudge for pecking at my hand."

"Yet you did not come near—us—for nearly two days!"

"Could I help that? I was obliged to entertain my friend, and the days went miserably enough whenever I thought of you—"

"You do well to qualify the admission, sir."

"And that was always! Are you not still a little angry with me? Come, confess. Did you not think it a little—strange—that when others who—regard you—should make their little offerings to mark the day that saw the world made brighter for your being born into it—I should have come to you with empty hands?"

"Not at all. Well, then, yes—a little."

"Yet it was in my pocket all the time, and you were so surrounded I never got an opportunity of speaking to you alone, so there it stayed. Hang the thing! I had half a mind to pitch it away or smash it under my heel—so!"

"No, no! Not till I have seen what is inside. Cruel! Besides, it is mine, and people have no right to throw away other people's property. *Ah!*"

The nucleus of an inch-square agglomeration of white paper,

string, sealing-wax, card-board and cotton-wool, was a diamond and sapphire ring, whose stones, inimitable as to color, size, and water, were almost rivalled in lustre by the fair eyes that dwelt rapturously upon the lovely trinket. A few years ago and Rosalind would have openly rewarded the giver with a kiss. If she kissed him in her heart on this occasion, who shall wonder? For what woman ever resisted jewels, or did not in her heart regard the temptation of Margaret as greater than that of Eve?

"So you like it? Let me put it on your finger. *May I?*"

"Indeed you shall."

"Aye, but that is not the hand I want. The left hand for me."

"Dear! How particular you are. There!"

And Miss Innocence held out the left hand with the index finger alone available for girdling purposes, the other pink digits being crumpled up in a ball in the middle of the rose-leaf-tinted palm.

"The proper hand now, but not the proper finger. No. I will not have the middle finger, it is too large, and the little finger is too small." For the simple girl had poked them out under his nose one after another. "The third; that is the one I want."

"The third is the engaged finger. A girl does not wear a ring upon the engaged finger—"

"Until the man she loves puts it there."

"That is the rule; but perhaps one may stretch a point to oblige an old friend. So put your ring on that finger, if you will; you must not mind his taking it off when he comes, poor fellow."

At this barbed arrow the young man winced and quivered; but he had taken his courage in both hands, and was not minded to drop it yet awhile.

"Dearest heart, loveliest Rose, I will put it on, but nobody shall ever take it off again except myself, and that will be to leave another in its place. Say that you love me as I love you. Be my wife, dear, for I worship you—I adore you, my sweet, sweet girl!"

He went on, mixing sentiment and bathos, poetry and prose, hopelessly together; but there was the true ring of manly passion in his pleading, and she thrilled at it. Out of the abundance of the heart that loves the mouth stammereth, and your earnest wooer is seldom glib of utterance.

He took her white finger prisoner with the sparkling circlet, and from that moment she was conquered—her coquetry was gone. He led her, trembling and submissive, to a rustic bench set under the shadow of an ancient cedar, and screened by its rugged bole and sheltering branches from the view of the house—such seats have been the absolute and acknowledged property, by seisin corporeal and user immemorial, of the great family of lovers ever since the world began—and there their lips met, not with the kisses of their childish days, yet innocently enough, God knows.

As her head sank upon his shoulder, as her eyes drooped, even in the gathering twilight beneath the gaze of *his*—a noisy outburst of barking from the dogs recalled the pair to consciousness of the outer world again. In another moment the collie tore at full speed across the lawn and vanished among the trees of the plantation on the western side of the Hall. The other dogs followed upon his heels in full cry. Two white streaks, rapidly disappearing in the distance, were barely recognizable as the cats. The magpie, unequal for once to the exigencies of the occasion, remained behind, swearing.

"Poor things! they fancy mamma is coming. They have been watching and waiting for her all day. One cannot make even Jock understand that she is ill and shut up in her room. Dear Philip, I am a selfish girl to have forgotten that, even for an instant." She kissed her hand and waved it towards the house, with a pretty, tender gesture. "Ah, it is well you love her, else could I ever have given you my heart! For she and I are one. I should dread to break the news to her that we are—of what has happened, but that I know you would never wish to part us, Philip. See, the dogs are coming back; they have found out their mistake by this time. Jock! Jock! come and tell us who has been scolding you!"

Jock came to the call, all drooping and dejected, and laid his head resignedly upon Rosalind's lap.

"Are you growing old and blind, my doggie, that you take a stranger to be your mistress, even at a little distance away?" she asked, with pretended severity. "Tell us who it was you followed into the wood? Tell us who spoke harshly to you and sent you back again?"

But Jock was dumb.

CHAPTER VII.

AT THE SHRIEKING PITS.

THE person whom the dogs had followed traversed the plantation by a side path, and, avoiding the western avenue that led to the upper lodge gates and out upon the Norwich road, left the Hall grounds by a private latch-gate opening in the palings some distance higher up. The person whom the dogs had followed was a woman: a woman wearing a plain gray cloak of some light summer material over a white dress, and having a scarf of black lace thrown carelessly over her head. The faithful instinct of the collie had not betrayed him. The woman was Mrs. Kavanagh.

The gate opened into a field—a wide, sloping meadow, with a public footway running across it. After a moment's hesitation she followed the narrow path to its termination, and, crossing the high stone stile that gave access to a steep lane, squeezed in between high banks crowned with hedge-row and skirted with fern, turned to the right and went on steadily.

Her course was an upward one. The steep banks became less steep; the signs of cultivation on either hand became fewer and fewer as she proceeded. Soon hedge-row shrubs were replaced by tufts of heather or clumps of coarse bracken, seared and dried by the autumnal heat. When the lane itself left off, a rickety finger-post indicated the narrow track that led onward in its place as the way to Yelmerton Common. The common presented itself as a wide, up-stretching expanse of sandy moorland, crowned at its highest point by the half-obliterated indications of some old Roman earthworks and the ruins of a beacon. The path led over the hill.

Before following it, Mrs. Kavanagh hesitated again, and looked uneasily about her. The heather was shaken here and there as an invisible rabbit bounded across an unseen run, or a stray pheasant rose whirring into the open. The hum of the late-roaming, heather-loving bees, and the chirp of the grasshopper were almost

the only sounds that broke the silence. She climbed the hill without another pause.

The ruins of the beacon passed the track then began to incline downward. After a hundred yards or so the hill broke suddenly away. Standing on the edge of the furze-bordered cliff thus formed, at an elevation of some twenty feet from the plateau below, sparingly overgrown with scantling vegetation, the attention of the guide-accompanied pedestrian was invariably directed to the curious excavations with which its sandy area was honey-combed in every direction, and his thirst for information as inevitably assuaged by the information—delivered in the broadest of local dialects:

“Them’n be the Shriekin’ Pits.”

Sepulchral chambers or secret storehouses or abandoned refuges of some prehistoric race of dwellers in the earth—whatever origin or use archæologic science attributes to them, whatever title knowledge or tradition may assign them—the Picts’ houses of the Scottish moors—the erd-chambers of the Irish heaths, the Shrieking Pits of our Norfolk commons are the same. Rudely burrowed in the soil, their converging sides lined with uncemented stones, their roofs of roughly-shapen blocks level with the surface of the ground, they present, in every respect, identical characteristics, showing that the brains which designed and the hands that fashioned them were actuated by a common motive, and the need they supplied was a common need.

It had been twilight in the grounds of the Hall, twilight in the meadow and between the high banks of the lane, but here upon the heath the day was slow in dying, and in the western sky the last embers of the sunset still smouldered behind bars of purplish cloud. Upon the northern horizon, beyond the rugged billows of moorland that went rolling up to meet it, the faint calm line of ocean was visible through a curtain of brooding mist.

She paused upon the brink of the low cliff before descending the path-way that went winding down its face, and looked across the sombre distance towards that faint gray line.

As she did so a light flashed up and faded, and again leaped into brightness, and the golden finger of the far-off light-house went pointing out to sea.

With the last glow of sunset still upon her face, she looked

downward then. A man was standing on the plateau beneath, watching her, waiting for her. He beckoned.

And she went down to meet him.

The man was Reginald Hawley.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLOSING IN.

So, even as the dragon's teeth, sown in the old classic fable, quickened and sprang up in the likeness of armed men, to threaten and destroy, the buried evil of her past rose up and menaced her now. So from the old House of Shadows in the Place du Congrès at Brussels a shadow stretched across the lapse of years and fell upon her blackly.

As she came steadily towards him, over the broken ground, he threw away his cigar and slightly raised his hat. Trivial acts of courtesy, both commonly due from a gentleman towards a lady, but their omission in the present instance would have been less insulting than his manner of observing them.

They stood together now beside the brink of one of the pits, from which the flag-stone roofing had been partly stripped away, and looked in one another's faces. In his there was triumph, something of cynical amusement, and something, too, of unwilling admiration. In hers, shame and anguish and despair were written, as with a brand. The mental conflict of the past few days had accomplished in her what might have been the work of years. Wasted, like wax in flame, by guilty apprehensions and torturing dread, she stood before the man whom Fate had singled out to be his own avenger, and met his glance with hers. Even with the walls of her stronghold crumbling about her, the ground mined beneath her feet, there was no cowardly quailing in her regard of him.

"So you got my letter? No need to ask the question," said Hawley, "as you are here."

"I got your letter. Must I tell you again that I risk observation—that I imperil my reputation in meeting you like this?"

"Odd!" ejaculated Hawley, not addressing her. "I have read

of an actor who played his part so long and so thoroughly that at last he believed himself to be the person he represented. Here's the situation reproduced—and in real life—in the person of an adventuress who has sustained the character of a respectable woman for twelve years, and who thoroughly believes, now, that she has a reputation to lose !”

“ You sent for me that I might listen to this soliloquy ?”

“ You're mistaken. I sent for you because I wanted to ascertain whether the deliberations of last night have furnished you with the answer to a question which, at the risk of being wearisome, I'm going to repeat. What do you intend to do ?”

“ What do I intend to do ?”

“ With regard to the settlement of the claim which you acknowledge I have upon you ? The discharge of a trifling debt which stands—you don't deny that it stands—between us ? The exact sum—less twelve years, some odd months' interest at such and such per cent.—a consideration which I have generously agreed to forego—amounts, if my memory doesn't fail me, to exactly six thousand pounds.”

“ I have already told you, you shall be paid.”

“ But how and when ? Might a mere mortal, gifted with an ordinary capacity of patience, ask when ?”

“ Every farthing of money that belongs to me by right shall pass into your hands as it passes into mine. More than that I cannot say. Don't drive me too far !”

“ She might,” said Hawley, throwing back his head, and supporting his stick behind his broad shoulders in an attitude of idle ease, “ she might be said to entertain a rather one-sided view of the present situation in asking not to be driven too far.”

Her bosom heaved under its light covering, but she made no reply in words. Only she drew from its troubled resting-place a little silken case, and held it to him.

“ Three hundred pounds,” said Hawley, taking it and running through the notes it contained with a careless finger. “ Previously offered as a solatium or a bonus, a bribe or an instalment ; and rejected—as in the present instance—absolutely.” He closed the case and returned it.

“ Take it, and in a few weeks you shall have as much again. The yearly allowance I receive from my—through my marriage settlement—”

"With a marriage settlement as well as a reputation!" commented Hawley. "It is sufficient, as our Parisian neighbors would say. You are familiar with the French language—I leave you to restore my adapted quotation to its original form."

She went on without noticing the interruption. "My yearly allowance amounts to six hundred pounds. It may be possible—I believe it is possible—to raise a sum of money, secretly, upon the deed of settlement, sufficient to discharge your claim. I only ask for a little more time in which to make the necessary arrangements. As to the jewels and other trinkets I possess—"

"You were wearing diamonds when I had the honor of being introduced to you the other night," interrupted Hawley. "And in every respect the jewels were worthy of the wearer. They should be worth a decent lot of money?"

"I believe they are. But they are heirlooms belonging to the family whose name I bear. And I will not rob my husband, even to save myself from you."

"Supposing it possible for you," said Hawley, "by any breach of conscientious scruples, by any sacrifice of personal property or personal pride, by any known means ever resorted to by a desperate woman in a desperate strait—to save yourself from me."

"Will nothing satisfy you?" The menace of his manner, the provocation of his tone, had failed to shake her courage or disturb her forced composure. But there was a note of anguish in her voice now that betrayed itself beyond her mastery, and her hands clasped and wrung each other beneath her cloak, as he answered:

"Nothing will satisfy me but one thing. I'm not a rich man. Money means as much to me as it means to others. But it weighs as light as thistle-down in the scales when I balance it against my revenge on you."

She said, hoarsely: "There are others beside myself who merit that. Why revenge yourself on me alone?"

"Because you alone happen to be at hand. Your worthy colleague, proprietress of the gambling-hell in which I first had the privilege of meeting you, has shown a clean pair of heels up to the present, Mrs. Kavanagh."

She sighed heavily, and wiped away with her handkerchief the perspiration that had begun to gather on her temples and

about her lips. She had not entreated to her enemy till now, and the entreaty came as though it had been wrenched from her. "Have a little mercy," she burst out, "upon a woman who has wronged you, and who repents of it! Let the memory of your mother, if you remember her and love her, plead with you for me, and"—her voice broke and faltered—"and for others," were the words that died upon her lips.

"You do well to name my mother to me," said Hawley, bitterly. "My mother died in England on the night on which I was robbed in Brussels. Robbed, not alone of money, but of my last remaining chance in life. Look at me, and tell me whether I am likely to have mercy on the thief, now that I have caught her?"

She looked at him, and there was no relenting in the glance that met her own. She repeated his own words after him mechanically. "I think that you will have no mercy on the thief, now that you have caught her!" Life and expression faded out of her face; she looked as she had looked on the night of their meeting. Her head drooped upon her bosom; she gathered her cloak about her and turned to go.

"Stop!" said Hawley. Have you nothing more to say to me?"

She returned, doggedly, without looking at him, "I have nothing more to say to you."

"Then I have something to say to you before we part. Don't entertain the idea of running away and so escaping me, because such an idea does injustice to your cleverness—and you are a clever woman. If I were not sure of you should I have left that money in your possession? Hide from me in England, hide from me abroad, you won't hide long before my hand lets in the light upon you in your lurking-hole. Twenty-four hours will not have gone over before you find me following upon your heels."

"Boast as you choose," she answered, "there is one hiding-place where I shall be safe from you—there is one refuge to which you daren't follow me."

His eyes followed the direction of her finger as it pointed to the ground; his inward conviction told him that the words were spoken in terrible earnest.

"Do you mean," he said, "that you are desperate enough and brave enough to kill yourself?"

"I am desperate enough and brave enough to kill myself!"

"Do it then!" said Hawley. "Hide from disgrace and exposure in the grave, if you like. Others are left behind to suffer in your stead; others may feel the shame that you are past feeling and bear the punishment that you are past bearing. Have you forgotten that?"

"No, no! Oh, for God's sake!—"

The great deeps of the guilty woman's agony and remorse were broken up as she uttered that piercing cry. She stretched out her hands towards her accuser and clasped them in wild entreaty—she would have kneeled to him if he had not prevented her.

"Listen to me!—let me speak to you!—let me kneel—not on my own behalf, but in theirs! My punishment is just; I am ready to expiate, as shamefully and as bitterly as you will, the wrong I did you in the past. But spare them! They never harmed you! You can't understand, all undeserving, all vile as you know me to be, how they love me! You don't know the ruin, the misery, you could bring upon them, almost with a word; you don't know what hearts those are that you could break to-morrow, if you chose. Oh, for God's sake, spare my husband and my daughter!"

"Spotless wife, admirable step-mother, acknowledged queen of a county's society," said Hawley, "I think the time has come when the imposture must end and the impostor be exposed—strictly in the interests of the community at large. You have reached the end of your tether, in a word; and you ought not to complain, because it has been long enough. Go home now to your husband and your daughter, and your admiring circle of acquaintances, and remember—excuse the Scriptural quotation—that you know neither the day nor the hour when your punishment is coming, but that it will come, most certainly! Do nothing rash, lest you should hasten the inevitable crisis. And if I should take a fancy to maintain, for some little time, the footing of a visitor in the household—which I am sure you manage with grace and discretion, and all that sort of thing—be good enough to accept the situation. Do you hear?"

"I hear," Mrs. Kavanagh answered, sullenly. She had risen to her feet and regained her self-control—outwardly, at least. "And suppose I refuse to endure the hourly, daily torture you

mean to inflict upon me with your presence under the honorable roof that never sheltered shame until it sheltered me? Suppose I say, 'Strike now, and end my misery, or *I* will?' What then?"

"'What then?' Why, I answer," returned Hawley, "that I'll strike when I please. To-morrow, or a week hence, or a year from now, according to my humor. And as to your taking the initiative, and bringing the walls about your own ears, by way of being beforehand with me, you daren't do it."

Her heart confirmed him if her lips did not. She dared not do it!

"So you had best give in quietly to my whim—if it is a whim," said Hawley, "without more heroics. What's that?"

He started round upon his heel as a little loose soil, dislodged from the sandy brink of the low cliff that rose behind him, slipped down its crumbling face with a rustling noise.

"Nothing," she said, wearily. "A rabbit or a bird, perhaps. This place is solitary—this place is avoided, after twilight, by the village people."

"All right," rejoined Hawley. "Perhaps it was a rabbit or a bird, as you say. *I* have got nothing to hide. *I'm* not afraid of listeners. People don't suspect you yet; there's no reason to suppose that anybody could have followed you, creeping and dodging and slinking out of sight, all the way from the Hall." He looked at his watch. "Nearly eight o'clock. If you don't hurry back now you'll be late for dinner; they will be wondering where you are. Best to keep up appearances, you know, until there's no need to keep 'em up any longer. Remember, I'm to dine with you to-morrow night; your husband asked me, and you confirmed the invitation. Queer, all things considered, that I should be a guest at your table—but I like queer situations. Come, I'm in a more agreeable humor now I've had my say. I've frightened you—you're white and trembling. Shall I see you part of the way home? No? Safer not, perhaps—safer not."

Once more he removed his hat with a courtesy as intolerable as that he had exhibited before. He adjusted it on his head; he thrust one big hand into the pocket of his loose tweed coat, and walked away from her, carelessly swinging his walking-stick and whistling a tune.

CHAPTER IX.

MORE SHADOWS.

MRS. KAVANAGH retraced her steps to the Hall in the gathering darkness. Thanks to its friendly cover, she was able to cross the paddock and stable-yard, to traverse the garden, and finally reach her own room by one of the glass doors that opened on the terrace, unobserved.

She appeared in her usual place at the dinner-table that evening. Perhaps her courage and composure had never been so severely tested, her tortured heart had never been so sorely wrung, as when she was called upon to meet the glad welcome of the familiar looks that awaited her there; to respond to the affectionate solicitude that manifested itself in inquiries after her health, with her ordinary manner and tone.

Rosalind slipped an arm in hers as they entered the drawing-room together. The time had come to disclose the only secret the daughter had ever kept from her mother; to impart to that truest friend and counsellor the plot of the little love-drama, which had played itself out under the beeches on that happy afternoon, to its happy ending. As Mrs. Kavanagh moved, without pausing by her favorite chair or her favorite flowers, without responding to the ingratiating advances of the Persian cats or the affectionate demonstrations of Jock, the collie, to the door of her private room, and turned to bid her good-night upon the threshold, Rosalind, with all a spoiled child's assurance of immunity from rebuke or impulse, followed her across it, and delayed the leave-taking.

"No, no! not good-night yet! Consider how little I have seen of you for the last two days, and how lonely I have been without you. I never make your head worse, when it aches, by talking—you have said so over and over again. Let me stay a little while, darling, and talk to you now."

She pushed a low-cushioned chair to an open window; she invited Mrs. Kavanagh to sit in it with a look and a kiss—and

settled down on a low stool at her side. It was a still, warm night; not a sound broke the quiet of the shadowed garden except the twitter of some restless bird, or the tap upon the window-glass made by the heavy body of some clumsy-winged summer insect, as it flew towards the light of the shaded lamp that softly illuminated the room.

Rosalind leaned her head luxuriously back against her mother's shoulder and closed her eyes. The attitude was favorable to deliberation; she was at that moment endeavoring to select, out of half a dozen different methods that presented themselves to her, the easiest way of breaking the news.

"Leave it till to-morrow," her heart whispered. "Why give pain to the one whose claim upon your love and devotion is stronger even than *his*—before you actually need? Why not be happy in the old, peaceful, quiet way, for one more night?"

Happy! If she had known the tumult raging in the breast against which she leaned her head, busy with its own fancies! Peaceful! If she had known how that peace was menaced! But she did not.

"Philip was here to-day," she began, in spite of all her elaborate mental preparations making, the announcement rather abruptly.

Mrs. Kavanagh responded, "I thought so. I thought I heard your voices in the garden, my love."

Rosalind put out another feeler. "Do you know, darling, I think—though Philip was always nice, of course—that he is improved of late. He has grown so manly and so strong; and his nature is as sincere as his heart is generous, I do believe. He would be kind and helpful to any one in trouble—any one who was in danger or distress might safely trust him, I feel sure. What was it, darling? Did anything startle you?"

Mrs. Kavanagh stirred, and sat upright in her chair. She mechanically repeated her daughter's words: "'Any one who was in danger or distress might safely trust him.'" Her oppressed heart beat more freely; the blood began to circulate more quickly through her veins. "Suppose *I* were to trust him?" was her unspoken thought. "Would he help *me*?"

"He was so sorry to hear that you had a headache," Rosalind continued. "He is so fond of you, dear. I believe—if it could possibly be—that he is almost as fond of you as"—

"As he is of my daughter," the weary woman said, touching the soft cheek. That cheek, with its fellow, grew suddenly crimson, as Rosalind jumped up, and, turning down the lamp, which flared up, just then, conveniently, came back to Mrs. Kavanagh's side. "It is so much pleasanter in the dark," she said. "Mamma, I feel curiously young and small to-night, in spite of my nineteen years. May I sit on your lap as I used when I was a child? May I"—she took the old place without ending her sentence—"may I tease you with questions as I used to in the old days?" she went on, more confidently, now that the darkness hid her mother's face from her. "Mamma, you had been married before you married papa; you must have been even younger than I am now when you were first engaged? Ah, you had a mother living then, perhaps, who was as dear to you as *my* mother is to me. How did you break the news to her? How did you tell her that he loved you, as Philip loves me? How did you tell her that you loved *him*, as I love Philip?"

Her voice trembled and died away. She waited with a beating heart for the reply.

None came. She raised her lips to her mother's lips; they startled her by their coldness. She tightened her clasp about her mother's neck; the arms that encircled her returned no reassuring pressure.

"Oh, speak to me, mamma!" she entreated; "your silence frightens me—it makes me afraid that you are angry with me. Pray, pray speak to me!"

The answer came then, in changed, husky tones, that were barely recognizable as Mrs. Kavanagh's: "Forgive me if I frightened you, my love. I'm not well—I'm not myself to-night." She roused herself with an effort; she shook off the numbness that had stolen over her when her last hope died, slain by her daughter's words. "You startled me with your news, for one thing," she went on. "Had I guessed part of it already? Perhaps so. Quite news to me, though, to hear that my daughter has given away her heart; quite news to hear that Miss Rosalind Kavanagh is going to become Lady Lidyard. Has Philip spoken to your father? Have you? No; of course it is reserved for me to tell him to-morrow that he has lost his daughter. Come, let me hear everything. When is the wedding to be? Has Philip got as far as that already? No answer? Ah,

I know what the matter is! I haven't congratulated my sweetest! I haven't said I'm pleased! The Lidyard estates are among the greatest in the country—the Lidyard diamonds are fit for a duchess to wear—or my Rosalind! How could I be otherwise than pleased?" She put Rosalind roughly away from her; she rose to her feet, and burst out laughing.

Rosalind looked at her in silence. It has come to all of us, sooner or later in life, to acknowledge ourselves less indispensable to the happiness of those dearest to us than we once fondly imagined; to find them easily reconciled to the absence that tortures us; to know that we suffer more in the thought of an approaching separation from our beloved than the beloved themselves. That inevitable experience had come to her. "Oh! mamma," she broke out, wounded to the quick by the thought that the prospect of their parting could be treated so lightly by her mother, "are you so ready to part with me? Have I been so unreasonable, so unloving, that you are glad to get rid of me, after all?"

The pathetic tones of the clear young voice, the touching sorrow in the candid eyes that met her own, pierced to the very heart of the unhappy woman.

"'Ready to part with you!—glad to get rid of you!' Oh, my darling—my darling!" She snatched the daughter of her adoption to her bosom, almost fiercely—she covered her with kisses—she lavished caressing epithets upon her in an irrepressible outburst of despairing tenderness. "Have I ever been cold to you—have I ever been unkind to you that you should think so hardly of me? Have I ever—?" her tone changed. "Do you remember when you were a child, and said your innocent childish prayers at my knee? If I had died then, you would have remembered me lovingly?—the memory of your second mother would have been a tender, sacred memory with you always? Not a thing to shrink from—not a thing to shudder at as!—Oh, my God! I'm talking wildly—I'm frightening you again—I'm only fit to be by myself, to-night. Kiss me—and let me go!"

She tore herself away and ran into the adjoining bed-chamber. The curtain fell behind her, the door closed upon her, the key clicked in turning. For the second time that day—for the second time in her life—Rosalind found herself locked out of her mother's room.

CHAPTER X.

THE STORY CONTINUED IN ANOTHER EXTRACT FROM GEORGE KAVANAGH'S PRIVATE JOURNAL.

"SELBRIGG HALL, *September 23d.*

"THE cat—perhaps it would be more appropriate to say the Cupid—is out of the bag at last. My pretty niece Rosalind and my handsome young friend Philip are openly engaged! The announcement that everybody has expected for I don't know how long, has been made, the fact that has been perfectly patent to everybody from the beginning has now been triumphantly brought forth to the light of day. It is wonderful to observe how surprised everybody is.

"When I say 'everybody,' I don't mean the population of the county, but speak of the representative members of the two families henceforth to be united by a closer tie than that of friendship. Lady Lidyard came blundering over here this morning. I use the term 'blundering' advisedly, in relation to a woman who creates a whirlwind when she enters a room, and knocks down most of the lighter articles of furniture in it before leaving it. Her ladyship was good enough to express her pleasure at the prospect of the match. No other choice on Philip's part could have reconciled her, she declared, to becoming the Dowager Lady Lidyard but the choice he happens to have made. Not bad for the mother of a baronet whose property and title came to him on the demise of a hypochondriacal bachelor uncle! Not bad for a woman whose husband was only a plain, henpecked 'Mister!' But the person who reminded my lady that she has no legal right to wear a handle to her name because her son has got one, would do it at the risk of annihilation. Nobody has yet volunteered for the service, and it is unlikely that anybody will. While that indomitable woman lives she will stick to her honorable prefix; and when she dies, her tombstone will be not only a lasting memorial of all the femi-

nine virtues, but a continual testimony to the obstinacy of the feminine temper and the tenacity of the feminine will.

“I have said that the county is not to be taken into our confidence just yet. With the necessary allowances for leakage, the secret will be kept for another week or two, when official announcement of the engagement is to be made through the medium of a ball. The Chase has not been the scene of such a merrymaking since Philip came of age. Now the Chase will uncover its ancient brocade, and beeswax its historical oak, and set its noble old cellars flowing in honor of Philip’s intended wife. Staid local notabilities will frisk and gambol upon its polished floors with the wives and daughters of their neighbors, while their neighbors perform corresponding evolutions with their own womenkind; the local depot will contribute its quota of men who, disdaining to show their heels to their enemies, have yet no objection to exhibit them for the delectation of their friends; and the Daffodils and the Greens will be invited to flourish side by side, upon this most special occasion, as peaceably as their vegetable namesakes do in London market-gardens. As for the young couple whose determination to make each other blissful or miserable for life is to be announced with such a flourish of trumpets: Philip—I take Philip first—is alternately radiant and sheepish; with the glow and tremble of her young happiness upon her, my niece looks prettier than ever. Brilliant plumage, sweet notes, bright glances for the pairing season; moulting feathers and cracked tones and leaden looks for the nipping winter, when youth and hope and song and love lie buried under the snow.

“My brother James is almost as gratified as Lady Lidyard with the news of the engagement. Philip’s father was the friend of his early manhood—Philip is almost as dear to him already as a son. My brother’s wife—!

“Is it possible that eyes more loving, more familiar with her looks and gestures than mine are, have failed to notice the extraordinary alteration that a few days—I might say a few hours—have wrought in Mrs. Kavanagh?

“She is strangely restless and irritable in tone and demeanor. The gracious quietude, the matronly repose, that came like balm to soothe the wearied senses, the tired mind—where are they?

Gone, with the candid look that solicited your confidence, the charming smile that thanked you for it when it was given. She laughs as frequently, and with as little cause, as an affected woman of society, who has got nothing in her head but her teeth, and is bent on showing them. She talks continually, and most upon the theme, of all others, that she might be expected to avoid. Rosalind's engagement, Rosalind's future husband, Rosalind's brilliant prospects, are continually the subjects of her conversation. The eager desire she exhibits to hasten the marriage arrangements by every means within her power I should stigmatize as indecent did I not guess the truth.

"Ah, is it unnatural, as well as unreasonable, that we should, some of us, rebel against the decree that Nature has issued and that Heaven ratifies? They are bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh, or united to us by ties even closer and dearer than the ties of consanguinity, bonds of natural selection and instinctive tenderness—those who drink of our cup and sleep in our bosoms, and walk the daily path of life side by side with us. Our joys are theirs, and as little of our sorrows as we can spare them; they are ours in affection and sweet obedience; ours in heart and mind; till one day a stranger comes, and once palm has met with palm, and glance with glance of our beloved, they are ours no more. Love's alchemy has wrought in them the mystic transmutation, and our wildest pleadings or our sternest commands are of less avail than the waving of a finger or the trembling of a hair, to turn them from that new, strange fealty.

"Well, well! Let the comprehension, the sympathy, that may never be openly expressed, be written down here. I understand. And again—I am sorry for Rosalind's mother!"

CHAPTER XI.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

"I BROKE off in that last sentence to renew my ancient acquaintance with British sport. Killing time by killing partridges is, in my middle-aged days, as it was in my young ones, a recognized form of diversion for hot weather, in the opinion of the

landed English gentleman. Dare I say that I resigned my pen for the less lethal weapon with a feeling of regret?

“My brother James, my young friend Philip, and his friend Mr. Reginald Hawley, with the addition of myself, made up the party. The game-keeper in attendance was an old acquaintance of mine, and in the days when I remember him the most notorious young setter of springs, ferreter of rabbits, tickler of trout, and appropriator of pheasants in the county. The chrysalis in corduroys has burst, in process of time, into a butterfly in velveteens and leggings. My scapegrace young companion in many an unlawful adventure of wood, stream, and fallow is now a gray-headed, wooden-faced family man, irreproachable as to character, and the terror of the poaching fraternity for miles round. They can't imagine, for the life of them, poor rogues, how it is that he circumvents them; how the unlawful presence of fur or feather upon suspected premises is invariably detected by Luke, and as invariably brought home to them. ‘Set a thief to catch a thief’ is a vigorous old Anglo-Saxon proverb. Perhaps some of the sharper among them quote it when the name of their old enemy crops up in conversation now and then.

“It has been a still day and a scorching day. The crackling of the stubble underfoot, the smell of baked earth, dry vegetation, and gunpowder reminded me of the old days when I followed my father from field to field, and from cover to cover, proud in the possession of the first gun I had ever called my own. Let me thank the steady hand, the quick eye, the experience gained in those early days for much: for deliverance from death by starvation, for deliverance from death by savage beasts and still more savage men, in the wild years of my later wanderings upon soils less kindly and under skies more burning than those of my native land.

“My interest soon flagged, my attention soon wandered. If I betrayed a lack of interest in the sport, so did Hawley. He shot almost at random, it seemed to me, though his shooting almost invariably met with success. He yawned when he stopped to jam fresh cartridges into the breech, he yawned when the birds fell to his gun, and though he swore when he missed, he didn't swear with any heartiness. As to my brother and Philip, they did their duty as behooved two responsible British landowners, and slaughtered systematically, and with the tranquil

enjoyment that comes of habitude. I lagged behind at last, and began to listen to the game-keeper. It is needless to say that fulminations against the deeds of poachers great and small formed the staple of the conversation which he addressed to one of his subordinates. The cottage of one Moses Fenman, a laborer, living on—it was suspected by—the estate, and supposed to be the possessor of a gun, had lately been subjected to a rigorous search for the unlawful weapon, of which, however, no trace had been discovered, according to the under-keeper.

“‘Dar sea!’ ejaculated Luke, with immense disdain; ‘you goo walk’n’ in an’ ask himn to show it you, maybea. Luk in th’ chimna corner, yu did, an’ behind th’ door, an’ under th’ bed, an’ takes your leave, I s’pose. Luk up th’ chimna, an’ on th’ rufe, an’ in th’ matrass sackin’ next time, before yow comn away.’

“‘Or in the pightle,* or on the sheltered side of the muck-heap, under the straw,’ I suggested, breaking in upon the colloquy. ‘There’s no better hiding-place for a poacher’s gun than a muck-heap, when its warm and dry. You used to keep yours in the muck-heap, Luke, when you and I were boys.’

“With this remark, I tossed my own gun to the giggling under-keeper, and walked smartly away.

“I had had no definite intention of going to the Manor-house, but my aimless walk led me across the field path-way back into the grounds of the Hall, and through the upper lodge-gates out upon the village green. A hobbled horse and a couple of donkeys were the undisturbed possessors of the patch of pasture; the sound of droning voices came through the open windows of the school-house, where their infantile persecutors were pent up, simmering in the broiling heat of afternoon.

“‘I beg your pardon, sir.’

“A stranger’s voice addressed me—a stranger confronted me when I turned round. A neatly-dressed, ordinary-looking little man, with a smug, business face. He might have been an auctioneer, or a lawyer’s clerk, or a surveyor’s assistant. He was very hot and dusty, and he wiped his heated face with a large white handkerchief as he begged my pardon again, and begged to be directed by the nearest way to Selbrigg Hall.

“I pointed to the gate-way I had just emerged from, with my stick.

* Ditch.

“‘The family are at home,’ I said to him; ‘but visitors are always free to walk through the grounds. Not that the place is a show-place, but there are some parts of it well worth seeing.’

“‘I am obliged to you, sir,’ returned the little man, ‘but my errand is not one of pleasure.’ He looked at his dusty clothes mournfully, as he added, ‘I came from London this morning to keep a business appointment with a person resident in this neighborhood. It has been a long journey and a hot journey, and when I got out at the nearest station, four miles away, I found that, no conveyance being attainable, there was nothing for it but to walk. I have walked, as you observe.’ He glanced at his dusty boots this time, and the spectacle they presented really appeared to distress him. ‘I have heard it said, sir,’ he went on, ‘that people rarely appreciate the blessings of living in the country until they take up their abode in towns. Let me say, for my part, that I shall return to London this evening with a more grateful comprehension of the advantages enjoyed by a resident in that metropolis than I ever was conscious of before to-day.’

“‘Fresh air, green trees, bright skies,’ I suggested, pointing with my stick to the lovely landscape that spread about us. ‘These are advantages that London hasn’t got to give you. Let me recommend you to enjoy them while you can.’

“He, too, looked at the landscape, disparagingly, and shook his head. ‘In point of space,’ said this obstinate little man, ‘you have got the better of us, I admit; but space is confusing—too much of it. You are green enough, I grant, but to a Londoner your greenness is obstrepulous. Not but what your air is fresh enough, though I *have* heard medical practitioners say that a tinge of smoke is far from being un’healthy. The parks, sir, are more to my way of thinking. Not the parks alone! Lord! I could show you a square in Finsbury—!’ He broke off, and pulled out his handkerchief and once more mopped his face. ‘I’m forgetting my business, I’m keeping a client waiting,’ he said; ‘both against rules. Sir, I wish you a good afternoon.’

“The gate-way swallowed him—he was gone. On the powdery road at my feet lay a card; I stooped and picked it up. On it was coarsely printed:

DIX BROTHERS & CO.,

BILL BROKERS, REVERSIONARY AGENTS, ETC.

PRIVATE DISCOUNT BANK OF MIDDLESEX,

4 MINTING YARD, LYDGATE STREET, E.C.

"I put the card in my pocket, I don't know why, and walked on, leaving the money-lender's clerk or partner, whatever he is, to pursue his way to the Hall. It was no affair of mine, but I caught myself wondering what *he* wanted *there*?"

"Almost unconsciously my footsteps led me to the Manor-house. Yielding to the impulse of the moment, I passed under the green clipped arch that dominates the gate-way and rang the hall door-bell. No one answered. I knocked, and the sound seemed to echo through the whole house. I glanced aside at the windows of the room, half library, half dining-room, where Hoell usually sits. The blinds were drawn down. Once more I knocked, and this time the door was opened by the house-keeper, Mrs. Weather. Before I could utter the words of inquiry that were upon my lips, she stopped me.

"'My master can see no visitors,' she said. 'It's one of my master's bad days. He can't even bear his own folk near him at such times, much less'—she broke off there, but her look added insolently, 'much less you, a stranger.'

"What could I do but apologize, leave a polite message, and retire? Her glossy-black eyes watched me from the threshold till I had passed through the garden-gate, as suspiciously as though I had been a tramp. The man who spoke to the woman who carries gypsy blood in her veins, in the language of the gypsies, is no favorite with Pleasant Weather.

"It was growing late as I retraced my steps to the Hall. The nearest way to my own room led along the corridor upon which the doors of the library, dining-room, drawing-room, and those other of the principal rooms of the house which are situated on the ground-floor and look upon the garden, open. The door of Mrs. Kavanagh's private sitting-room opened as I passed—its mistress appeared upon the threshold. With her, and in the act of taking leave from her, was Mr. Dix.

"Mr. Dix—it is so easy to call him by that name upon the card—pretended not to recognize me. As the servant appeared

to take him away, Mrs. Kavanagh delayed him. 'The business must be attended to immediately,' she insisted, anxiously. 'Remember that I must hear from you not later than to-morrow afternoon.' Mr. Dix, who appears to be more susceptible to Nature in the form of a handsome woman than in that of a charming landscape, laid his hand upon his heart, and assured her that she should positively hear from him by the afternoon's post upon the following day. As he vanished, my sister-in-law turned to me. 'Do you wonder that I am anxious to have my business attended to?' she asked. 'It is of vital importance to me, if it doesn't matter to anybody else. Here is the whole of it in a nutshell: I have got six old, six positively genuine Sheraton chairs. They resemble our friend the Parliamentary candidate for Slowetown in the respect of being seatless. I am going to intrust them to the best upholsterer in Norwich to be restored—and he has sent his foreman out here to look at them, and to make an estimate of the cost. You have a soul for old furniture, George. Remind me, to-morrow, and I will show you my Sheraton chairs before they are taken away.'

"I insensibly yielded, as I always do, to the charm of her manner and the melody of her voice. It was not until afterwards, when I was safe in my own room, that I began to wonder. To wonder why the dusty traveller of the morning, self-avowed a Londoner, and carrying the business card of a city firm of money-lenders, should reappear upon the boards of Mrs. Kavanagh's private sitting-room in the character of an upholsterer's foreman from Norwich. And of half a dozen hypotheses that I invented to account for this extraordinary fact, not one but proved to be as destitute of any supporting basis as Mrs. Kavanagh's Sheraton chairs."

CHAPTER XII.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

"AT the dinner-table this evening the usual house-party was augmented by the presence of Sir Philip Lidyard and Mr. Hawley. Upon my brother James, upon myself, and my once fellow-passenger on board the *Volga*, devolved the task of keep-

ing up the ball of conversation, for the lovers confined themselves almost exclusively to an unspoken dialogue of lover-like glances, and Mrs. Kavanagh was unusually pale and silent.

“He talked—I mean Hawley—and talked well. Let me do him justice in setting down that favorable opinion. He has travelled much and seen much in the course of the years in which he has followed his profession; and he can describe his experiences in language sufficiently vigorous and well chosen. He has a rough, rather brutal fund of humor at command when it is needed, and an infinite capacity for enjoying his own jokes, especially those in which the quality of wit is least perceptible. Shall I confess to these pages that once or twice to-night I thought his boisterous laughter as offensive as it was causeless, and his free-and-easy manner both insolent and ill-bred!

“Prejudice crops up in every line of what I have written here regarding Philip’s friend. I deplore my own weakness in giving way to so puerile a vice. I endeavor to eradicate it from the mental soil in which it has fastened, but the stalk comes away in my hand and leaves the roots still obstinately sticking. Unprejudiced people—taking my genial brother James and my young friend Philip as representatives of that class—regard Mr. Reginald Hawley in quite another light. To them his noisy laughter, his confident manner, his familiar style of address—repulsively familiar, in *my* opinion, when the object of his attention happens to be of the opposite sex—may appear as natural and agreeable manifestations of the open nature and the kindly heart—with the possession of which prejudiced persons, like myself, don’t credit him.

“Not solely on account of that sad old story. The savage instinct which leads a young child to take pleasure in the dismemberment of a living fly, or the torturing of a kitten, is the same instinct which prompts the many acts of brutality, or cruelty, or mere thoughtless levity, in which our boyhood revelled in times past, and which our manhood sickens at to-day. God knows, if these deeds of our careless youth were brought up for our arraignment in later life, how many a strong, upright man would have cause to bow his head in shame, or in open gratitude to the Divine Mercy which preserves so many of us, almost against our wills, in some moment of overpowering temptation, from overstepping that fatal boundary which divides from crime.

Hawley's once victim has held out the right hand of fellowship to him ; it is our duty, in the face of that generous example, to extend it, too. If my grasp be not as hearty as I could wish, am I to blame?

"Are we? For the strict monopoly of prejudice against the new addition to our modest circle may not be boasted by me.

"Coming in from the heated dining-room to-night, into the mellow light and flower-scented atmosphere of the drawing-room, I saw my niece and Mr. Hawley close together, by the piano. She was seated, making a pretty picture in her simple white dress, with her golden-brown hair coiled about the pretty head that bent over the music she was searching through, and he was stooping over her, affecting to help her, while he talked to her in a low tone. As I looked at them, admiring her, and admiring *him*, for he is a fine, personable man, as the old women say, and his careless style of dress contributes admirably to the advantageous display of his robust physical development, his big throat, his square head, his broad shoulders, and his muscular limbs, the harmonious relations existing between my niece and her father's guest were evidently disturbed. Rosalind pushed the music away from her and suddenly rose from the piano. Without another word, without another look in his direction, she turned from him and walked away to the other end of the room.

"She met me half-way, and took my arm in that pretty, confident way of hers, and drew me towards a window recess where the light curtains fell about us like a mist, and a stand of flowering shrubs effectually screened us from observation.

"'I hate that man!' she burst out, incautiously.

"'My dear,' I expostulated, weakly, 'are you speaking of Philip's friend?'

"'Of Philip's friend!' she retorted, pinching my arm smartly. 'How can he be a friend of Philip's? How can Philip look at him in the ridiculously admiring way in which he is looking at him at this moment?'

"'My dear,' I repeated, more weakly than before, 'there is a certain amount of unreasonableness—'

"She pinched my arm this time quite viciously.

"'Argue as you choose, say whatever you can in his favor,

nothing on earth shall induce me to like Mr. Reginald Hawley. Talk about unreasonableness! You don't call Jock unreasonable when he slinks away from, or shows his teeth to, the stranger whom his instinct tells him is untrustworthy or dangerous! Is the instinct that warns a woman to avoid the man whom she feels to be the enemy of herself and of her sex, less worthy of respect than Jock's?

"What has he done? What has he said to convey such a disagreeable impression, my dear?" I asked. Secretly, I should have been rather obliged to my niece than otherwise had she been able to furnish me with a presentable reason for disliking the man.

"He has done nothing," she answered. "But he looked at me, he spoke to me in a way that makes my blood boil when I recall it. When we were together at the piano, a moment or two ago—" She stopped and looked puzzled. "The words seem meaningless now," she said. "We were turning over the music, mamma's and mine. He suggested that the piano might not be our only resource in the long winter evenings; that probably we played cards as well. Whist, poker, *écarté*, especially *écarté*. He seemed to take it for granted that we were adepts at all these games. "You are mistaken," I told him; "we never play cards. Mamma disapproves of cards." Mamma was standing close by; she must have heard me. He put his hands in his pockets and laughed softly to himself. He leaned against the piano and repeated my words with quite an indescribable manner and tone: "We don't play cards. Mamma disapproves of cards!" I can't account for the indignation against him that his words roused in me. I only know that I hated him at that moment inexpressibly—that I walked away from him lest he should see the hatred in my face."

"The words were harmless enough," I said, trying, as ineffectually as usual, to do him justice. "Mr. Hawley has lived among rough people, as he tells us. Mr. Hawley has, perhaps insensibly, acquired a manner which does not endear him to young ladies who stand upon their dignity. Let us acquit him of any intention to be offensive in adopting a certain familiarity of tone in addressing the young lady who is the promised wife of his oldest friend."

"Mr. Hawley does not know of my engagement to Philip,"

responded my niece. 'I have asked papa not to tell him of it—I have forbidden Philip to mention the subject to him—and Philip knows better than to disobey me. The sentiments I entertain towards Philip's friend are of such a nature that I should instantly break it off if he as much as mentioned my engagement in my hearing. Better not be engaged at all,' said my niece, 'than be obliged to endure the congratulations of a person of that intolerable description.'

"With the delivery of this final shot she left me as a servant announced, 'Mr. Hoell Brinnilow.'"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

"It struck me even in the first glance at him that he was looking worn and ill. His accustomed elasticity of spirits had deserted him, he leaned upon his crutches, as he moved across the room, with the heaviness of mental depression and physical weakness. He did not give his hand on this occasion to Hawley—it was plain to me that he even avoided looking at him as much as possible. His thin cheeks colored with a faint reflection of the burning red that had stained them on the night of his meeting with the old tyrant of his boyish days, when Mrs. Kavanagh spoke to him, and his glance encountered hers. When he finally subsided in an arm-chair and shaded his eyes from the light with one lean, shaking hand, I was as unfeignedly relieved as *he* was in his no longer being the focus of general observation.

"The evening crept slowly away. I looked about me and recalled, one by one, other evenings I had spent in that room since my arrival: the cheerful, pleasant flow of conversation, intermingled with music and with laughter, and broken by silences that were as natural and unstrained as the pauses in a bird's song; the atmosphere of home-like ease, the simple charm of which the stranger felt and yielded to. How was it that he failed to feel it now! As we had been on other nights we were to-night; the same home party gathered in the same home room. What was lacking? There was a nameless chill upon us, there was an

unseen blight upon us, that froze the laughter upon our lips and withered up the kindly flowers of genial ease and cheerful confidence in their first bloom.

“Was Hawley the cause of this? He must have been. Of the whole party he was the only person present who was natural or at ease. There was little constraint upon the conversation with which he favored us. He talked, and talked about himself, for the most part. It should be admitted, in justice to this gentleman, that in professing to hold an indifferent opinion of mankind in general, he does not, after the fashion of his fellow misanthropes, secretly make or candidly avow an exception in favor of himself. We are all of us humbugs, according to him, and the noblest, the sincerest, the worthiest among us are simply those who counterfeit the best. He tells us so, and appeases our indignation at being found out and taxed by him with the frank admission that he is a humbug himself—and perfectly aware of it.

“‘Look at me!’ he says, in effect. ‘A man singled out to perform an arduous duty; a man who is expected to justify the confidence placed in him by his employers and the public, by furnishing the greatest possible amount of reliable information—upon subjects which don’t interest the great mass of newspaper readers in the least—in the most condensed form possible, and in the shortest possible space of time. Do I justify that confidence? As well as ninety-nine men out of a hundred, perhaps, as little fitted, by natural ability and previous education, to follow such a profession as I am myself. I didn’t choose the profession—it chose me. Interest in a certain quarter was the stone that helped an idle, good-for-nothing young rascal into the saddle that should seat a better man; influence in the same quarter keeps him sticking in it while his betters are sprawling in the mud. Don’t admire me for my candor in speaking plainly. I’m only candid because I don’t care a hang for your admiration or your disapproval either, my very good souls!’

“The largest and most dismal breach in a conversation—which was remarkable for uncomfortable intervals and oppressive pauses—was repaired by my brother James. My brother is, as I have before said, a man of few words and regular habits. One of these habits consists in going to sleep after dinner in a particular chair in a particular corner of the drawing-room. Wakefulness is painful but possible to my brother upon certain occasions when the

credit of the family demands it. He asserts and maintains this condition upon all such occasions by the telling of an Indian tiger-story.

“Who ever heard of an old Indian officer who hadn’t got a tiger-story? This is a tremendous one, and involves great exertions in the telling. It requires that all the faculties of the teller, if not those of the listener, should be kept upon the stretch. It involves the necessity—for its more vivid presentment—of my brother’s striding up the room, as in the act of leading his native beaters to battle, at the request of the chief Gooroo—what is a Gooroo?—of a certain village whose inhabitants long had groaned under the depredations of the brindled monster of the jungle; and of his creeping cautiously down it again, as in the act of tracking the aforesaid monster to its hidden lair. Its roars of agony when wounded have to be graphically rendered, and the sensations of the hunter on being knocked down and half-smothered by the tremendous impact of its expiring carcass are worth nothing if not dramatically conveyed. The story inevitably culminates in the exhibition of the marks of the creature’s claws upon the forearm of the hunter—in the description of the rejoicings of the population of the village, which turned out *en masse* to help carry the body home—and terminates with the indication of the skin—which has been made into a hearth-rug—with the bullet-holes adorned by a silver mounting, suitably inscribed.

“We have all heard the story times upon times. It begins: ‘When I was in Bengal in the year ’47—’ It began so to-night—I write late in my own room, being further from sleep than I ever remember to have been in my life—and went on at its usual rate of progress to its accustomed end, when my brother subsided, breathlessly, into his arm-chair, amid the grateful appreciations of those whom his efforts had rescued from conversational wreck.”

CHAPTER XIV.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“‘A good story, colonel,’ said Hawley. ‘Tiger-stories told by the hunter possess the admirable faculty of harrowing our feelings and soothing them at the same time. Everything must have ended all right for him, or he wouldn’t be sitting there to talk about it. Come, I’m not much of a sportsman myself, but I have got a tiger-story I’m inclined to back against yours. Are you inclined to hear it, for your part?’

“My brother, struggling, now that his muscles were relaxed, against the encroachments of approaching slumber, was understood to say that he should be delighted. We were all delighted, as Mr. Hawley surveyed one and another of us with a questioning glance. Philip composed himself to attention with an air which said, ‘The time has come now for my friend Hawley to distinguish himself; the time has come for my friend Hawley to prove himself to you the hero I believe him to be. Listen, as I am going to listen, with all your ears—this story is going to be no end of a story!’

“‘My story, unlike your story, colonel,’ said Hawley, ‘hasn’t got myself as its hero. My story, in the same way as your story, has got a man-eating tigress as its heroine. My friend, like yourself, got off with a mauling; he bears the marks of the teeth and claws of a ferocious beast of prey up to this hour. But the beast that gave them wasn’t like your beast, one of the ordinary sort. No. My tigress, colonel, was one of the human kind.’

“There was a slight stir and rustle in the room as he made this announcement. I don’t know from what quarter it came. I was looking at Hawley. I was wondering why the telling of the story was so delightful to him that he dribbled the words out of his lips as a miser might dribble coins out of a bag—one by one, and with a greedy, reluctant pleasure in hearing them fall.

“‘Am I unlucky enough to have forfeited your interest at

the outset by letting out that I'm telling the story of a tigerish female, and not of a female tiger?' he went on. 'Wait a bit! I pledge myself to recall that interest before I have done. The haunt of my wild beast, colonel, was not a jungle-cave in the Presidency of Bengal, but a gambling-house in the Belgian capital. She didn't tear out the throat and pick the bones of the hero of my story; she drugged his coffee and picked his pockets instead, of a considerable sum of money, which the young idiot—he was a young idiot, and a dissipated young idiot at that time—happened to have about him. And she made good her escape with her confederates before a rescue party'—he glanced at Philip—'which had been despatched from the hotel at which our young idiot was staying—tracked him out and hunted him down, forced an entrance into the deserted rooms, and found him there.'

"'Was there no possibility of regaining some of the stolen money by tracing out the thieves?' I asked, for his silence invited some conjecture. 'Did they leave no clew behind which the police might have made use of to that end?'

"'They left no clew behind which the police might avail themselves of,' answered Hawley. 'But something which might be classed under that heading came—never mind how—into the possession of the man who had been robbed, and he was wise enough to keep it from being submerged under the sagacities of the detective force of Brussels. It was a little thing enough—merely an old-fashioned locket, made to hold two portraits. One of them was the portrait of the woman who, his instinct more than his hazy recollection of what took place after he had swallowed that potent cup of coffee told him, had been foremost in the work of robbing him. With a kind of superstitious belief that the locket would bring about the end he had in view—did I say that he had made up his mind to hunt her down if it took years to do it?—he wore the locket about him night and day. One day the fancy took him to take her portrait from its case. He found a photographer's name on the back of it. From that day the accomplishment of his end began to grow slowly into view.'

"He paused and drew a long breath. 'It's a hot night!' he said, as he passed his handkerchief across his forehead; 'it's a hot night!'

"Hoell sat near a window. In his ordinary state of body and

mind *he* would have been the first to scramble up and open it. He remained still on this occasion, with his chin upon his hands, that were folded across the top of the crutch he used to lean upon, looking at and listening to Hawley. I rose, in his default, to open the glass door. In doing so I was obliged to pass close before my sister-in-law. Inadvertently, I touched her foot with mine. In response to my apology she never spoke, or looked, or stirred more than if she had been a woman carved out of stone. The faint light of the softly-shaded lamp touched the white hands lying clasped together in her lap, but did not reveal her face to me. She, too, was absorbed, no doubt, in listening to Hawley's story.

"He went on, as if the slight interruption had never been, still addressing himself to my brother as his listener-in-chief.

"*"I must consult your memory, colonel,"* he said, *"before I get on further with my story. Among the more prominent events in the comparatively recent history of crime in France, the trial of Monsieur Achille Biard for forgery, fraud, and murder had its share of popularity with the English Press nineteen years ago. Have you any recollection of the trial?"*

"Of us all, I was the only one who remembered the case, though not through the instrumentality of the English Press. I testified, for *my* part, to that remembrance, on my brother's testifying to ignorance on his.

"*"Among the many successful disguises invented and carried out by that arch-swindler and blackguard, Monsieur Achille Biard, before the perpetration of the series of crimes which led up to his well-merited end,"* said Hawley, *"was one which Monsieur Achille adopted for a comparatively harmless purpose—compared with his usual purposes, of course. Among the young lady pupils belonging to one of the principal boarding-schools situated in the suburbs of Paris, in the year 1864, quite a sensation was excited by the appearance of a positive paragon among drawing-masters, in the place of a predecessor resigned. The predecessor was old and snuffy, and addicted, among other harmless weaknesses, to the use of garlic. Imagine for yourself, then, the flutter created among the young ladies by the advent of a smart young man in a velvet coat, with a small waist, a scented cambric handkerchief, a complexion like a cupid on a chocolate-box, and a waxed mustache."*

“He appealed directly to Rosalind this time. Rosalind responded, not having forgiven him yet, ‘Oh, I beg your pardon! Irresistible, of course.’ And looked back again at Philip, who had been looking at *her*.

““‘Irresistible, of course,’”’ echoed Hawley. ‘Quite a rage for art became perceptible in the school, and the most stubborn fingers made no objection to hold the pencil, when guided by the handsome young drawing-master’s hand. Enthusiasm glowed hotly for some little time, and then went down below zero, when it was found that the drawing-master’s eyes and heart were already engaged in the direction of the English pupil-teacher. The English pupil-teacher was an uncommonly handsome girl. The English pupil-teacher had a sad history. She was an orphan, born of a marriage between people unequal in rank—the offspring of an English father and a French mother. Her undeniable good looks and her painful antecedents were made use of by the young ladies, on occasion, to wound and irritate her in the agreeable way common, I’m told, to young ladies, especially those at school.’

“He looked at Rosalind—he appealed to Rosalind a second time in speaking these words. My niece disdained to give him a look or a word in reply.

““So, the situation given, it’s not difficult to imagine the second situation which arose out of it,’ Hawley continued. ‘A handsome young man on one side, a beautiful, presumably inexperienced girl on the other—a proposal of marriage made and accepted. What wonder if the English pupil-teacher found herself outside the gates of the boarding-school one fine day, with her trunk by her side, and her little fortune of a few hundred francs in her pocket, and the handsome young drawing-master—in the character of a husband this time—calling a *fiacre* to take them the first few hundred yards upon the road which, presumably, they were to travel together for the rest of their lives.’

“Rosalind was beginning to forget her dislike of him in her growing interest in the story. ‘Poor girl!’ she said, half audibly. My own heart echoed the words, ‘Poor girl!’

““Need I say that she was surprised when she found that road smoother than she had been led to expect,’ said Hawley. ‘She had been prepared to work with him or for him, if need be, with the absurd self-sacrifice of her sex. Those sentimental

days of newly-married bliss—she rather regretted than otherwise—were spent in a pretty house in a fashionable suburb, instead of in a garret in a sordid quarter of the town. The only work her husband applied himself to was the work of engraving, which he sedulously practised in a room at the top of the house—a room which even *she* was not allowed to enter. And the only way in which she was expected to employ herself was in cashing bank-bills and notes of exchange with which he furnished her from time to time, and in bringing him home the money—the money earned by our handsome young drawing-master in the exercise of his profession as a forger and a thief.’

“‘And she was his dupe?’ I broke in.

“‘She was his dupe,’ responded Hawley. ‘Things had gone on in this way for three years—a daughter had crowned the happiness of Monsieur and Madame Biard—you see I’m telling the story in the regular novelistic way—when her eyes were opened by the arrival on the scene of the police. Monsieur Biard, having had due warning, got away. Perhaps he knew that it would be fatal to encumber himself with a woman in his flight; perhaps he was tired of her. It’s not unlikely. He left her, and her arrest followed, as might have been expected.’

“‘He was an abominable scoundrel!’ my brother commented, quite hotly for him.

“‘He was a stupid one,’ amended Hawley, ‘not to recognize the harm her very innocence was capable of doing him, instead of counting on it, as he did, as a card in his favor. He got away, as I have said. He was not able to leave France, because the police were more wide-awake than usual, and the seaports and frontier towns were under close surveillance. In a friend’s house he found security for the time being. She—’

“‘A woman, then?’ I interrogated.

“‘A woman,’ assented Hawley. ‘A woman whom he had deceived with a pretended marriage, as he had deceived the English pupil-teacher at the boarding-school. A woman who must have had some regard for him, even then, for she was jealous enough to be dangerous at times. No need to tell you the sordid, miserable subject of their final quarrel. Enough that it was a quarrel which led to his murdering her, and to his ultimate detection and arrest, as a consequence of the crime. You have said that you remember the trial?’

“I answered, ‘I remember the trial.’

“‘No need to meddle with the trial, except where its result is concerned,’ Hawley went on. ‘Monsieur Achille Biard was convicted of a long string of fraudulent offences, Monsieur Achille Biard—I have refrained from calling him by any of his various *aliases*, with a view to being as little confusing as possible—Monsieur Biard had been caught red-handed from his murderous deed. Enough to say that the defence set up proved utterly backboneless. Enough to say that he was convicted, and suffered the ultimate penalty imposed by the law—’

“‘And the unfortunate girl who had been deceived by him,’ I broke in again. ‘What of her?’

“‘Why, I must remind you, if you don’t remember,’ said Hawley, coolly, ‘that she was convicted of complicity in his latest frauds. She was young enough and handsome enough to gain a great deal of public sympathy, and to visibly prepossess her judges in her favor. According to the regular scale of chastisement imposed by French justice for such offences as those she was found guilty of, she suffered a light punishment when they sentenced her to five years’ imprisonment.’

“‘Unhappy young creature!’ I exclaimed, irritated and galled by the callousness he displayed in recounting the dreadful story.

“‘She didn’t find herself badly off in prison,’ Hawley resumed. ‘The matron took a fancy to her, and spoke to the governor in her favor. The governor’s account of the attractive prisoner interested his wife, an elderly lady, mischievously given to benevolent works. Upon seeing the prisoner this good lady was much overcome. It turned out, on inquiry by her husband, that Madame Biard—I shall occasionally call her so, to avoid monotony—presented a striking resemblance to a younger sister of the wife of the governor, a lady who had married unfortunately and died unhappily, in comparatively early youth. Consequently, the burden of prison life weighed less heavily than ever on the shoulders of our interesting friend. She was allowed to read, to write, to nurse the sick in the prison hospital. I believe, through the interest of the persons who had obtained her these concessions—against the rules of prison discipline and prison routine—that she obtained her discharge before she was entitled to it. Once free, her first thought—’

“ ‘Was of her child,’ I interrupted. ‘Poor creature! And what of the child?’

“ ‘The information in response to her inquiries came after some delay,’ said Hawley. ‘A letter from the woman to whose charge the child had been intrusted told her that the child was dead. The result of the shock was a serious illness.’

“ ‘As might have been expected,’ I said.

“ ‘Oh, as might have been expected, I suppose,’ said Hawley; ‘even a tigress may be attached to her cub, it’s allowed. Aha! I see by your face you’ve put together the unconnected links in my story for yourself! You’ve guessed that my innocent English pupil-teacher and my dangerous siren of the gambling-house in Brussels are one and the same. From the moment when she rose from her sick-bed to the moment when the man whom she had robbed picked up the locket dropped by her in the act of flight—the locket containing the portrait of herself and that of her child, taken in the days, we must suppose, when she was a happy wife and mother, or the willing tool of an unscrupulous adventurer—all trace of Madame Biard was lost. Her identity was swallowed up in that of the handsome Englishwoman who served as decoy to a gambling confederacy—the man-eating tigress who lurked in wait for human victims day by day, and when she had got them dragged them to her den that she might suck their blood and crunch their bones at her leisure.’

“ ‘He spoke of the woman with such smothered rancor and hatred, that despite his previous assurance that another man and not himself was the hero of his story, I took the liberty of doubting him. I would have taken my oath that he concealed himself under the thin disguise of that other man!’

“ ‘The facts regarding the woman’s past came into the possession of the man who had got the locket with her face in it,’ he went on, ‘slowly and by degrees. When they were all in his possession, he was no nearer her. She eluded him, in spite of all his attempts to find out her whereabouts. Years passed. Many changes took place around him—in him, too, perhaps—but his purpose never changed, his determination never weakened. He meant to find her—and he did find her. Not in the haunts to which criminals, such as she was, might be expected to resort. She had risen in life; she had used her beauty and her cleverness to the best advantage. He found her an honored

wife, the bearer of a respected and respectable name; the irreproachable mother of children, let us say, whose only experience of the criminal side of human nature was gathered from the newspapers—'

"Hoell interrupted him there for the first time. 'Stop!' he said, suddenly, leaning forward over his crutches and speaking with great earnestness. 'You have used the word "criminal" twice in speaking of the woman of your story.'

"'If I did,' Hawley returned, 'I used the right word in the right place.'

"'The wrong word!' Hoell burst out, fervently. 'The wrong word in the wrong place. Next time you speak of that woman don't call her a criminal—call her a martyr!'

"My brother James was the next to speak.

"'I agree in part with my friend Brinnilow,' he said, 'and I venture to hope that in the case of your friend, sir, his humanity was stronger than his sense of justice. We shall all have need of mercy one of these days—there are few of us who can bear the thought of that last court-martial of all,' said my brother, 'with a conscience at rest. I hope your friend remembered that, and spared the woman who had injured him. For the sake of her husband and her children, if not for her own!'

"'For her own, above all!' said Hoell. 'For the sake of the unmerited sufferings endured by that unhappy victim of man's vileness and man's treachery, her sin should be dealt with tenderly, even by the man whom she had wronged. Was there no excuse for her, if, in her misery, forgotten by Heaven as well as outcast upon earth, she turned, as the only refuge left her, to association with wretches who trade upon human folly, human vice, and human despair? When the Gate of the Prison opened for that woman and the Gate of Hope shut in her face—when she stood in the sight of the world once more, her womanly purity and pride outraged, the memory of her wifely love a thing to shudder at, her good name gone forever—her child, the one treasure left to her, snatched away by inexorable Death—'

"'Stop a bit,' said Hawley, 'you're getting on too fast.'

"'You said yourself, just now,' asserted Hoell, 'that the nurse's letter told the unhappy mother of the child that the child was dead.'

“‘And I didn’t say,’ retorted Hawley, ‘that the letter was a lying letter. The child wasn’t dead! The child’s alive!’

“As these words left his lips Mrs. Kavanagh rose up in her place with a dreadful cry. It rings in my ears now as I write these words. It was ringing in our ears still, when, as we surrounded her in the alarm and consternation of the moment, she beat us from her, wildly, with her hands, and ran from us as though to escape from the room. Only a few steps she had taken before her head fell forward, helplessly, upon her breast, her knees bent under her, and she dropped at our feet like a creature stricken dead.

“I have tried to sleep. I can’t sleep. I have lighted my candle and lighted my pipe, the faithful solace of many lonely days and wakeful nights. The sight of my Journal spread open on the desk, with the dry pen lying across the page, has tempted me to begin writing again.

“I have been glancing through pages that were written days ago. I lighted—why should I on this particular night?—on the account of the dream I had that night at the inn at Hull, and read it through. And the words spoken to me in my dream by the chief of the gypsy tribe, the old Ziganskie Attaman, have fastened on me, and will not be shaken off.

“‘The black-veiled bride who took the hand of my brother’s brother was Sorrow, and the shadow that fell upon the house of my brother’s people and swallowed it up, was the shadow of Shame and Disaster, and—’

“The feeling of terror that haunts me grows stronger and stronger. I did just now what I have not done for many years; I have knelt by my bedside as I used when I was a boy, and tried to pray. Broken words—only broken words: ‘If sorrow be coming upon those dear to me, if some awful unknown calamity be about to descend upon and overwhelm them, oh, avert it in Thy mercy, or temper the blow so that it be possible to bear it, in compassion for the earthly weakness of the creatures Thou hast made!’

“Peace came upon me, or weariness, and I slept after that prayer. Slept but to dream. I thought I stood upon the bor-

ders of the world beyond, looking, with eyes whose keenness mocked our mortal sight, into the celestial distance, towards a great white throne. And One sat upon it wrapped in more than mortal glory, but the terrors of His face were veiled in an eternal stillness, like the stillness that lies upon a frozen sea. And multitudes of saints kneeled round Him, stretching as far as the eye could reach; each in an unspeakable rapture of adoration, but petrified and dead. And at the feet of Him who sat upon the throne lay wreaths of roses, clusters of roses, and single blossoms, some fresh and blooming, others withered and dead. And it seemed that I spoke, and asked, 'What are those roses that bloom and wither at the feet of the dead God?' And the voice of one unseen replied to me, 'The roses are the flowers of earthly prayers.' Then, as I looked again, a fresh cluster shone out radiantly, and I knew that that prayer was mine. And even as I gazed, it withered away and fell to dust, unanswered. And I awoke, as the birds, nested in the creeper that climbs about my window, began to stir and chirp with the breaking of the new day."

END OF THE EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

CHAPTER XV.

BROUGHT TO BAY.

"No need," said Hawley, "of waiting at the meeting-place *this* time. She's there before me."

She was there before him. As she, standing where the narrow hill path-way swerved aside and dipped downward to the plateau beneath, had once looked down on him, waiting by the Shrieking Pits, so he looked down on her. No sunset shone upon his face. It had been a gray, still, misty day; it was a gray, still, rainy evening. There was a coppery reflection in the sullen sky, there was a brooding heaviness upon the atmosphere that gave forewarning of a coming storm. The first low peal of thunder rumbled overhead and died away as he went down to meet her.

The border of her cloak, the skirts of her dress, where they

had come in contact with the dripping herbage, were wet and draggled. There were rain-drops on her hair, where the hood that covered it had fallen or been thrust aside. There was a red spot on each of her pale cheeks, her eyes were unnaturally large and lustrous, and they met his, for the first time, without repulsion and without fear.

“‘It’s *my* turn to protest this time,” said Hawley, taking off his soft felt hat and beating the wet from it against his knee. “How do you know that *my* reputation isn’t endangered by my meeting you here by your own appointment? How do you know that the servant who brought your letter didn’t peep into it on the way? Upon my soul, you are an incautious woman!”

“More than that!” she answered. “Call me a frantic woman, and you will have hit upon the truth.” She drew close to him, she looked at him with wide-open, shining eyes; she laid one hand, almost familiarly, upon his arm. “Do I look mad?” she went on. “I feel mad. Mad with joy. Does my hand burn? Can you feel it through your sleeve? I’m in a fever. A fever of joy. Do you wonder that I couldn’t wait? Do you wonder that I wrote to you when I couldn’t bear the suspense any longer?” Her voice sank to a whisper, her hot breath scorched his cheek as she came nearer to him, oblivious, in her devouring eagerness, of the relations in which they stood. “Have you forgotten? Last night, when you laid bare the miserable secret of my past before them all—when you told the wretched story of my life to the friends who love me and believe in me—you left it unfinished. Tell the end of it now to me! Tell me about my child!”

Those last words broke from her rapturously and loudly. She trembled and shook, and her bosom heaved. The blessed tears came to her relief at last. She put up her handkerchief and wiped them away. “Women’s tears are annoying to most men,” she said, humbly. “Mine shall not annoy you if I can help it; but it is hard to keep them back when I think of her. I lay awake last night—I walked about my room, as I have done for many nights past—but this time it was happiness that drove sleep away. I tried to paint her face upon the darkness—I tried to imagine what she must be like after all these years. Useless! I can think of her only as a baby—I can feel her little arms on my neck as I speak now. Ha, ha, ha! It sounds absurd in your ears,

doesn't it?" She pushed her hood back impatiently. "The rain cools my head," she went on. "People have lost their reasons, haven't they, before now, who have been suddenly frightened or surprised? My brain went round when you told your heavenly news. Your voice sounded to me like an archangel's trumpet bidding the dead arise. You bade my dead arise, didn't you, when, with a word, you gave my little lost darling back to me? Oh, don't keep me in torture any longer! Be merciful! Be generous—as you were when you told me that she was alive! How shall I find her? Where is she?"

"How should *I* know?" said Hawley. He shook her hand, not roughly, from his sleeve, and thrust his own hands into his pockets.

She sighed, wearily and patiently. "He means to take his revenge before he tells me! Only fair, perhaps, only fair!" She caught him by the sleeve again, she turned him imperiously round, and pointed to the path that led homeward over the hill. "Come and take your revenge now; come and expose me before all of them. Then you shall stand upon the threshold, and see me as I walk away, like a beggar, down the avenue, with nothing in the world except the gown that I have on, and the knowledge that my angel is alive and waiting for her mother—where, you will have told me." She waved her hand northward, towards the sea that lay hidden behind a rampart of yellowish fog. "Patience, my darling! Courage! A little longer to wait, and there are happy years in store for us yet, together!"

All other considerations were merged in that one thought. The flood-tide of awful rapture that had risen in her soul had swept away the landmarks set by years, had obliterated even the remembrance of her husband and his daughter, had extinguished the fires of guilty terror and torturing dread of him, her enemy.

"Come!" she said, impatiently. "Let what you have threatened to do be done. What does it matter to you whether you do it now or in a week from now? Don't you see that I am ready? Don't you know that my child is alive? O good God! alive and waiting for her mother!"

"Don't make too sure of that," said Hawley.

Her eyes dilated, she let go her hold upon his sleeve. "What does he mean?" she whispered to herself. She pressed her hands

upon her bosom, to control her beating heart. She turned a searching look on Hawley.

It burst in upon her then, like a blinding glare of insupportable light, the cruel, pitiless truth. In spite of himself, he was ashamed. In spite of himself, he shuddered and turned cold at the shrill, wild cry that broke from her and went wailing out to sea.

"Come, you've got at the rights of it, I see," he said. "When I said before you that your child was alive, I lied. Why? Because I wanted to force you to a betrayal of yourself. To wring some admission from you. And I did. I got what I wanted. All's fair in love and war. And this is war!"

She looked at him strangely. She repeated after him, more strangely still, "And this is war!"

"You provoked me with your coolness, I'll acknowledge," Hawley continued. "I said to myself, 'I'll make her give some sign before I've done.' And I did, you know. There's something of the red Indian in my nature, I've often thought. I like to see my enemies suffer. I like the task of moulding and bending and breaking an obstinate will under the weight of mine. Even when I was a boy at school—"

He broke off, suddenly, and his face grew to a dusky red. Perhaps a figure on crutches rose up before his mental vision, crying: "Here is some of your handiwork. Be proud of it when you look at me!"

"Look here," he resumed, "in doing what I did last night I may have overstepped the bounds of fairness—I don't acknowledge that I have, you know. Still, I took you unawares. Not that I hadn't a right to treat you as I did, because you have no right on your side to be dealt with openly. Look here, again. Suppose I were willing to come to terms with you, for good and all—"

"Wait!" said Mrs. Kavanagh. She drew a letter from her pocket and held it out to him; she spoke to him and looked at him, with a curious alteration of manner and tone. "There can be no question of terms between us. A few days ago I asked you to give me time to raise a sum of money on my marriage settlement. Here is the reply from the firm of brokers whose advertisement I answered. They don't want to have anything to do with me or my settlement. They refuse to advance a single

penny on the deed without my husband's written sanction to the proceedings. They actually suspect my honesty! They delicately imply that I may be, for all *they* know, attempting to procure money on false pretences." She threw him the letter. "Read the letter for yourself, before you go any further; the letter may be responsible for an alteration in your views. Read the letter!"

"D——n the letter!" said Hawley. He caught it and crumpled it, contemptuously, in his hand. "Haven't I said to you that money alone won't content me? Do you think, supposing you were in a position to hand me over the whole sum as easily as I could toss this envelope back to you, that you would have done with me even then?"

He tossed the letter back to her as he spoke. Out seaward the solid wall of fog had parted in twain, and a sudden gust of fresh salt wind came rushing through the cleft, across the rain-soaked land. It caught her garments and tugged at them, and cast a few leaden drops upon his face—the first of a coming shower. It caught the crumpled ball of paper and rolled it back to his feet, and past them; then it vanished, as if the ground had swallowed it. Her eyes followed it steadily till it was lost to sight.

"Go on!"

"You provoked me last evening by that coolness of yours," remarked Hawley, "and did yourself—or narrowly escaped doing yourself—harm. Be wiser this time."

"Go on!"

"I am going," pursued Hawley, "to make terms with you."

"I refuse to accept your terms."

"Before you have heard what they are?"

"The terms will be like the maker, base and mean," she rejoined. "Dishonorable, even in the eyes of the common criminal to whom they are proposed. I will not hear them."

"You're trying to irritate me again for some purpose of your own," said Hawley, coolly, "and I therefore insist on keeping my temper. You are mistaken in your anticipations regarding the nature of the compromise I offer you. You were a handsome woman when I saw you first, you're a handsome woman still; but for all that—you're mistaken! You prided yourself on your virtue when you acted as a gambling-house decoy; you

have reason, I don't doubt, to pride yourself on it still. Go on doing so. Now will you hear my terms?"

The gesture she made might have been one of assent or of dissent. He accepted it for the former, and went on:

"I shall lighten my task of explanation considerably if I state at the beginning that the compromise I propose would be impossible to carry out if I were a married man! The younger son of an old family, surrounded by an unenviable halo of bygone dissipations and bad debts, in the full enjoyment of health, strength, and an insufficient income earned in a precarious way, doesn't command the highest bidders in the matrimonial market.

"What has this to do with me?"

"I'll tell you," answered Hawley. "Your poor devil is as hard to suit with a wife, in his way, as a poor duke. He likes youth; he prefers good looks and so forth, but money he must have, and plenty of it, if marrying is to help him out of his troubles. If he can get youth and good looks as well as money, he's a lucky devil! Your step-daughter, Miss Rosalind Kavanagh, is a charming young lady. Your step-daughter, Miss Rosalind Kavanagh, has got fifteen thousand pounds to her fortune. Why shouldn't I marry Miss Rosalind Kavanagh and square accounts with you *that way*?"

"Is this your plan of compromise?"

"In a nutshell," rejoined Hawley. "You see the part you will have to play in connection with it. Preach my perfections. Persuade, cajole—women know how to do these things! Smooth sailing for you. Easy terms to be let off on!"

"Easy terms!"

"I don't know that I shouldn't be bringing myself down in connecting myself with your family," resumed Hawley, tauntingly. "But Rosalind has got none of your blood running in her veins, when all's said. Once I'm married to Rosalind—"

"Don't say that name again!"

He looked at her contemptuously—he spoke to her contemptuously.

"Are you mad? I say, when Rosalind's my wife—"

"Don't speak that name again! I warn you, don't! You had better not!"

The fury that had been smouldering in the woman had leaped

up into a raging flame. Its white reflection played upon her face. Its devilish light was in her eyes, as she came towards him, saying :

“ You had better not !”

“ By God !” said Hawley, “ I believe I *had* better not !”

As he stepped back, she advanced upon him. As the sandy ground yielded and crumbled beneath his heel, he glanced over his shoulder, and with an oath sprang aside from the edge of the pit that yawned for him.

“ You’re roused at last, and mischievous, are you ?” he broke out, with another oath. “ Don’t try that game again ! It won’t do, Mrs. Kavanagh !”

She looked at him, still with that murderous light shining in her eyes. She laughed a dreadful laugh.

“ You fool !” she said. “ The bottom of the pit is shallow, the fall would only stun, not kill you ; there’s no water down there to smother you and hide you, dead, from living eyes. The grass by the edges is scanty ; the sand would keep the marks of trampling feet for days. Should I choose *that* way out of all the ways there are to choose from, if I had it in my mind to get rid of *you* ?”

He blustered out another oath as he looked at her. But she had cowed him for the moment, and he knew that she knew it.

“ You’re a clever actress,” he said, coarsely ; “ but you won’t put me out of countenance with your stage airs, or turn my blood cold with your stage threats. I can afford to wait until you come out of your tantrums. When you do, look the thing coolly in the face. Snatch at the rope I’m throwing to you, before you’re carried out to sea. Before you’re sucked down and swallowed up, and made an ugly thing for other ugly things to feed upon, down in the depths below. You know what waits for you there better than I can tell you.”

The gravel crumbled under his heavy tread, the sodden turf gave back no sound as the footsteps of her enemy passed away from her over the hill.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOELL.

HER rage died gradually out. A stupor came over her—the sullen stupor of utter despair. Her knees trembled under her so that it was impossible to walk. She sat down upon a stone that jutted out from the low cliff that rose up as a shelter upon her right. Her hands were folded on her lap. Heavy drops of rain fell upon her face and ran down in the channels where the tears were dry.

A hand touched her. A voice sounded in her dulled ears.

She lifted her heavy head. She recognized Hoell Brinnilow.

Spent in mind and body as she was, it hardly occurred to her to wonder at his presence. The gleam of recognition that had dawned in her dim eyes faded out as she looked at him. Her head drooped once more upon her bosom. She was alone again with her wretchedness and her despair.

He called to her; he touched her shoulder again. “Oh, speak to me,” he said, imploringly. “What place is this for *you*? Don’t you feel the cruel rain falling on you and drenching you? Don’t you know how cold it is? Pray, pray come home!”

The familiar word struck an awakening chord in her jarred mind. She put her hand confusedly to her head. “Home? What home? I haven’t any home! Go away, and leave a poor lost woman alone! Go away and forget me, if you want to be kind. I’m trying to forget myself, and they won’t let me!”

He shuddered as he looked at her. He appealed to her once more in an agony of solicitude and fear. “Think—think what you are saying! Rouse yourself—recall yourself, for God’s sake! Oh, don’t look at me—don’t speak to me like that! Oh, don’t—don’t cry! Every tear falls like a drop of molten lead—on my heart!”

His own tears dropped upon her hands as he bent over her. “Crying!” she said, in the same toneless way. “I’m not cry-

ing. I can't cry." The dreadful mists that clouded her dazed brain lifted. Her eyes looked at him with a ray of comprehension in them this time. "Why have you come here? Who set you on to watch and follow me? Is my horrible story the common talk? Am I and my misery the theme for village gossip and drawing-room scandal already? Oh, let me go! Let me hide myself in the merciful sea, since there is no place left for me on earth!"

He caught both her hands and held them as she rose wildly to her feet. He forced himself to speak to her with the firmness, the decision necessary, in that supreme moment, to recall her to herself. "Hush, hush! No one suspects you; your secret is safe with me. You shall hear how *I* came to guess it when you are calmer. Oh, if you knew what a load was lifted from my heart when the truth was made clear to me! Only fancy! I suspected you—you!—of being guilty of the baseness of a common intrigue—with that man! Oh, me! I have been wandering in a dreadful wilderness for days! I have suffered the tortures of hell, when heaven was within reach of me! Oh, my friend! Angel of my life, who found me in despair, and led me out of the darkness into the blessed light, forgive me and pity me. Forgive me, because I dared to doubt you. Pity me—because I love you!"

His strength failed him as the irrevocable words escaped from his lips. His head grew giddy, and ringing noises sounded in his ears. A convulsive paroxysm of trembling seized upon his limbs. He stumbled and fell at her feet. His head dropped upon her knees. "Is this death?" he whispered, as his eyes closed. "Is this death?"

In some strange way she gathered from his weakness the power that had deserted her. She put out her hand and touched him, and called him by his name.

"Not death, but life," she answered. "Live for my sake. What other friend have I to turn to, or to trust in now, but you? Come, don't lie there on the wet ground. Get up and think of a way to help me before it is too late."

Her words, her touch, had the desired effect. Hoell lifted his tear-stained face; his dim eyes brightened. "She asks me to help her! She says I'm her only friend! Think of a way! I must think of a way! Money! Money might help her, per-

haps—and I have none! She shakes her head! Not money! What then?" He sighed and shook his own head despondingly. "I don't feel as if I could think by myself." He appealed to her piteously. "Give me time! My head spins round, my mind's confused. Give me a little time!"

She helped him as he struggled to his feet, all panting and dishevelled; she stooped for the crutch that had fallen beyond his reach and gave it into his hand. "Be a man," she said, "in strength of mind if not in strength of body. You know my secret, you know the danger that threatens me; you know by whom it is threatened. Help me, before I am past all help, or call yourself *his* friend, not mine."

"His friend!" echoed Hoell. He laughed out, bitterly and harshly. "Have you forgotten? Is it possible that you haven't guessed?" He struck himself fiercely upon his misshapen breast with his clinched hand. "This would have been broad and straight and stalwart to-day but for him!" He pointed downward at the withered limbs that dangled helplessly between his supporting crutches. "These would have been sound and strong but for him, again! Oh, look at me! I'm not a man of God's making—I'm a monster, fashioned for *his* whim. *His* hands stamped the seal of deformity on me—he raised up the dreadful barrier that shuts me out from all that makes life worth living to other men! Curse him! May the wrath of God and my undying hatred blight him in this world, and sear and wither and distort his soul in the world to come, as my body is seared and withered and distorted in this! Your enemy is *my* enemy. Do you hear! D——n him! I wish he was dead! I wish—!"

She caught him by the shoulder; she forced him to look at and to hear her. "Listen to me!" she said. "You have found out the way to save me already."

He said, "How? Tell me the way?"

The awful light that had sprung up in her when she faced Hawley upon the brink of the pit, a little while before, sprang up in her again as Hoell uttered those words. Her worn and sunken beauty came wonderfully back; her youth was restored to her. Most beautiful, most terrible; instinct with a radiance that was not the radiance of earth or of heaven, she stood before him, drew his eyes to hers, and mutely bade him read his answer there.

He read it there.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE WAY TO SAVE HER.

“‘DREADFUL! Dreadful! You can’t mean it!—you don’t mean it!’

“Her lips moved. Sounds never die, they say. In my ears—in my heart, as along the endless fibres of eternity, those two words spoken then are ringing now—those two words will ring forever.

“I reeled where I stood, and though I was wet with rain and shivering with cold, the blinding sweat ran down into my eyes. Strong, powerful men have been known to swoon like women before now under the rapture of inexpressible joy or the revulsion of inexpressible horror. If *my* senses had failed at that moment there would have been excuse for *me*!

“She saw my horror in my face. She thought I shrank from her—from her! The contempt of her look pierced me like a sword before the reproach of her words stung and bit and goaded me to madness. Contempt merited—reproach deserved.

“‘You said you loved me just now. Oh! what is your love worth if it doesn’t give me back my husband’s honor and my daughter’s happiness? What is it worth if it doesn’t save *me*? You said that you were ready to lay down your life for my sake, and you tremble at the mere thought of risk and danger braved for me! Idle words—empty words!’ She stretched her arms above her head, and cried out in an agony, ‘*I tell you if these hands of mine were as strong as my heart is, he would be a dead man at this moment, and I a free woman! Do you hear?*’

“I heard. I heard, too, my heart beating loudly. I heard myself speak in a voice that was not like my own voice. I said, ‘*You shall be a free woman!*’

“She turned to me. Something leaped up in me like a flame at her look. Whatever had got possession of her had got possession of me. A sweet, cruel, deadly intoxication, that tingled

through every vein and fibre of me. A horrible, creeping chill, that caused my flesh to shudder and the hair to stiffen on my head. Ah! I can understand now the nature of the irresistible fascination that leads the criminal, step by step, along the road that ends in—!

“How long have I been sitting here, wet and cold, shivering and burning, staring at the black void of the fireless grate and thinking of the way?”

“The way to save you! The way to make you a free woman again! Oh, my love—my love!”

The night was very black and still. The threatened storm had broken some hours before. Amid the hissing of the scourging hail, and the rattle and roar of opposing cloud-forces, and the steely flashing of electric lances, it had wrought to an end, and passed, with rent and blackened mist-pennons trailing behind it, harmlessly out to sea. Not a sound broke the quiet of the sleeping house, except the ticking of the clock upon the mantel-piece, the dripping of the rain from the eaves without, the plash of water falling from overweighted branches into water underneath.

He raised his haggard face and looked slowly round the familiar room. His glance rested upon a costly velvet frame hanging against the wall by the chimney-side—the frame that had been made to hold his cherished collection of miniatures. And in that moment lay clear and plain before him the way for which he sought—the way upon which the originals of those faces on the wall had gone before him. And the hand of his house-keeper pointed it out.

“The paper! The paper that puts life and death into its owner’s hands! Why did I burn the paper? Why? the leering faces seem to ask. Oh, wicked, painted faces, hanging on the wall! Did I see in *her* face, to-day, some faint reflection of a look that stamps you all members of one fearful sisterhood? O Power that is above us all, in mercy strike me blind before that terrible resemblance maddens me again! Vile faces! evil faces! Tear them down and grind them into atoms before the terror of them and her and of myself comes upon me again and drives me wild!”

He struggled up out of his chair, and tore the heavy frame down from the wall and dashed it on the floor. He pounded at it furiously with his crutches till all semblance of humanity was beaten out of the wicked faces, and fragments of wood, and splinters of glass, and bits of painted ivory were ground into the carpet and scattered over the room by the active crutches and the trailing feet.

The work of destruction finished, he experienced a certain relief. He took out his handkerchief and wiped the sweat of terror and exhaustion from his face. As he did so he fancied that he heard a sound of breathing outside the closed door.

Then he crossed the room, quickly and quietly. He opened the door with a suddenness calculated to surprise any ordinary listener and looked out into the hall. It was empty. A light burned upon a table there.

He took the light and went, as silently as his infirmity would allow, down a passage that ran at right angles with the hall. It led to his own room. Beyond his door a short flight of stairs led to the house-keeper's bedroom. He fancied that a light glimmered under the door, and shielded the lamp he held with his body, so as to be more sure. He hesitated another moment, and then made his way up the creaking stair. The unlocked door yielded to his hand as he turned the knob. He went in.

The house-keeper's room was empty of the house-keeper. A pewter candlestick, holding a tallow-candle nearly burned out, stood upon the chest of drawers. The dying flame leaped up in its socket as he closed the door behind him, and then sank down amid the foully-smelling, hissing grease, and went out suddenly. He held his own light high above his head and looked curiously about him. The room was carpetless and plainly furnished; its walls were covered with an antique flock-paper, once red, now faded by age to a cinnamon color. The damp had loosened the paper from the plaster, so that it hung here and there in strips, and the draught from the open window stirred the loose pieces with a sound like the rustling of fallen leaves. The one or two chairs that the room contained were of heavy mahogany; a servant's plain deal-box stood in a recess on one side of the fireplace; the corresponding recess upon the other side was occupied by a clothes-press of some dark and shining wood. "Mother Endor's box and Mother Endor's clothes-press," Hoell whispered

to himself, as the shifting light brought these objects, one after another, into view. "In which of them does she keep her secrets, I wonder, supposing that she has got any left to keep? Which shall I try first?"

He completed his survey of the room as he spoke. Upon his left hand, midway between the window and the door, stood an old-fashioned wooden four-post bedstead—a plain, homely article of furniture, showing plain and homely and common even by contrast with the other articles of furniture in the room. He spoke to himself again as his eyes rested on it. He whispered—it seemed to him that some one else was whispering—"Why not try *there*, first of all?" and he moved to the bedside. He turned back the bed-clothes from the pillow, and lifted up the under sheet, bringing the wooden bed-frame plainly into view. He held the light close, and examined the surface of the wood intently. He shook his head then, and went round to the other side.

This time, on turning back the clothes and lifting the under sheet, the surface of the wood presented an inequality in the grain. About four inches from the upper edge of the bed-frame a faint horizontal line appeared. Where it ended shorter lines dropped from it vertically, and an oblong was completed by the addition of a second horizontal line, parallel with the first, and suggesting the existence of a concealed drawer. Hoell's sallow face wrinkled into a cunning smile. He tapped with his knuckles against the wood, within the boundary of those faint lines, and a hollow sound came back. He tried with his nails to pull open the drawer, but it resisted effectually. He took a little penknife from his pocket, and opened it, and inserted the blade between the edge of the drawer and the surrounding wood. The blade broke off short; the handle dropped upon the floor. Mother Endor's secrets were not to be got at that way.

But Hoell's patience was not exhausted yet. He considered a moment, and then pushed back the mattress from the side of the bed. Setting down the lamp he held upon a chair close by, he passed his hand cautiously along the edge of the bed-frame. Something sharp, yet blunter than a nail, scratched him as he did so. A little point of steel glistened in the light as he withdrew his hand; a dusty scrap of worsted attached to it arrested his eye. He took the loose end cautiously between his finger

and thumb. He pulled, and a long steel knitting-needle, rusty in some places and bright in others, rose from its wooden socket at the bidding of his hand. As it did so the drawer that it had held in place moved out slowly, and he looked in.

The drawer held nothing besides dust and flue, except an ordinary medicine bottle of dark-blue glass. Empty and dry? No; full and heavy! And as he lifted it from its resting-place and held it to the light, he saw before him clearly the way that was to lead him to the inevitable end.

He thrust the bottle into his breast and closed the drawer.

He took his lamp and turned to go out of the room.

As he did so his eyes encountered the dull-black eyes of Pleasant Weather. The house-keeper had been standing behind her master, watching him, as he rifled the secret hiding-place in her beebee's bedstead, of the bottle of Life-and-Death.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE STORY CONTINUED IN ANOTHER EXTRACT FROM GEORGE KAVANAGH'S JOURNAL.

“SELBRIGG HALL, *September 29th.*

“THE last entry made in my Journal bears the date of nearly a week ago. Anxious days—weary days—have filled up the interval. Mrs. Kavanagh has been seriously ill. A chill incautiously incurred, a neglected cold, have been succeeded in her case by a severe bronchial attack, attended by a degree of fever and an excess of physical prostration sufficient to alarm her family and cause her medical attendant considerable anxiety. But I am happy enough to record that all danger is past, and the patient is on a fair way to complete convalescence.

“Sir Philip has haunted the house from morning until night, on the chance of snapping up such stray crumbs of Rosalind's society as my niece—who, I need not say, has been constant and devoted in her attendance upon the invalid—has been able to afford him. Of Mr. Hawley we have seen nothing since the night of the 23d. Business connected with his approaching departure from England called him suddenly to London upon the fol-

lowing night. Business still detains him there. But Sir Philip has given us to understand that his friend returns in time to be present at the ball which is to be given at The Chase in honor of its master's approaching marriage to the prettiest and the sweetest girl in all the country round. And the ball takes place on the evening of the day after to-morrow.

"With regard to this same ball, I have undergone, and am undergoing, a considerable amount of suffering, mental and physical. My presence at this entertainment is vehemently insisted on by all the persons intimately concerned with it. Let me confess, to these sympathetic pages, that the social abomination known as an evening dress-suit hasn't found a place in my limited travelling-wardrobe for twenty years, and that if anybody had suggested to me that the deficiency would be remedied in twenty years more, I should have shaken my head. But now Fate has decreed, and the family credit demands, that upon this special occasion I should discard the easy-going garments of vagabondism, and appear before the eye of society clothed in the magpie garb of complete civilization. To this end, therefore, I have submitted myself to the manipulative mercies of the ninth part of a burgess of Norwich. The clothes have come home—I have tried them on—and the result is uniformly successful. I shall look as much like a waiter as any other man in the room, excepting that my complexion gives me the appearance of a waiter returned to resume the round of his usual avocations—say after a holiday trip to Botany Bay.

"One other guest will be even more out of place at the ball than myself. In spite of her recent illness, notwithstanding her present condition of barely-attained convalescence, my sister-in-law has set her mind upon being present. Expostulations are useless. Mrs. Kavanagh has put her foot down, and that handsome member is no more to be moved by arguments, persuasions, or dismal prophecies of future ill resulting to its owner, than if it belonged to a granite Memnon.

October 1st.

"The day of the ball. A sunny, genial, cloudless day. No threatenings of rain to damp the evenings dissipation. Pheasant shooting in the morning, tennis in the afternoon. My niece has carried out her threat of teaching me the game. Here is a new version of an old proverb: 'You may drag a middle-aged

man to the courts, but you can't make a player of him!" Rosalind has given me up in despair. Sir Philip has taken my stiff-jointed, elderly place. I can hear their voices and their laughter, and the brisk thump of the ball against the racquets, as I sit here writing in my room up-stairs.

"I left Mrs. Kavanagh sitting in a basket-chair on the terrace, watching the players. She was wrapped in a light shawl. The traces of recent illness are visible in the sharpened outlines of her features and the pallor of her face; but the character of her beauty has not deteriorated, though it may have somewhat changed. Upon my life, knowing as well as I do that there is a change in her, I can't define the nature of it. I can only maintain . . .

"Hoell was with her. I am fanciful enough to imagine that an alteration, as subtle, as indescribable as the alteration I have detected in Mrs. Kavanagh, has taken place in *him*.

"Mr. Hawley has returned from London. Having presumably settled his business, it may be reasonably expected that Mr. Hawley's visit to The Chase will terminate—that he will be leaving England for that remote quarter of the globe where his qualities are appreciated and his services valued—in a day or two. I have forgotten to mention that Mr. Hawley accompanied Sir Philip when Sir Philip drove over here this afternoon—that Mr. Hawley is here now.

"Let me ease my overloaded mind of a little of its prejudice. Absence has not endeared Philip's friend to the writer of these lines—I dislike the fellow even more thoroughly and sincerely than I did when he went away! I was conscious of a demoralized sensation of gratification in the knowledge that I had made myself disagreeable to the object of that stubborn dislike of mine a few minutes ago.

"In a word, I told him of my niece's engagement, anticipating the revelation which infallibly must, before half a dozen hours have gone over our heads, be made by somebody else. Rosalind's prohibition has been duly observed by Philip. Philip, with the dread of her condign displeasure upon him, has even succeeded in keeping 'My Lady's' tongue quiet. The news came as a complete surprise to Philip's friend, and, unless I

am very much mistaken, the surprise was the reverse of a pleasant one.

“‘The devil you say so!’ he ejaculated, and gave a whistle. He put his hands in his pockets and kicked a harmless little stool that had happened to get in the way quite viciously in the ribs. Not another word, good or bad, fell from his lips; his heavily-moulded features became sullen and lowering. He turned his back on me without a word, and strolled away to the other end of the terrace. The annoyance is easily to be accounted for. His friend has kept secret from him, without any potent reason for doing so, the knowledge of the great and important change which is about to take place in his life—his friend has left him to gather that knowledge from the lips of a chance acquaintance. Natural enough that Hawley should resent what a more sensitive man than he might regard as a slight. Natural enough!

“A knock at the door. One of the servants with a message:

“Miss Kavanagh’s love, and the tea’s waiting. Will I come down-stairs?”

CHAPTER XIX.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“I WENT down-stairs. The little round table had been set out upon the terrace and crowned with all the dainty paraphernalia that appertains to the sacred rite of afternoon tea. The game of tennis had just come to an end. My niece, with her obedient lover following at her heels, came to assume command of the kettle. The rest of us were gathered about. Something of the happy, homely, placid charm that I had missed of late I knew again. The incubus of constraint weighed no longer heavily upon me; I felt at peace with all the world, and friendly towards even Hawley, until I looked at him.

“The sullen, lowering expression was still upon his face. He had deposited his big heavy body in a wicker chair. He was tilting another chair backward and forward in one of his big strong hands. His lips went through the motions of a whistle,

but no sound came from them; his eyes were bent heavily and broodingly upon the pavement at his feet.

“As my niece, in the course of her duties about the tea-table, looked at him; as she paused with suspended sugar-tongs upon the verge of the tea-maker’s inevitable inquiry, Sir Philip stopped her.

“‘Don’t ask Hawley whether he takes milk and sugar,’ said Philip. ‘Don’t offer him any tea. He’s capable of appreciating all the blessings of civilization but that blessing. Something cool and fizzing, squirted out of a syphon into a tall tumbler, with something that doesn’t fizz in the bottom of it, is his idea of a drink that cheers without inebriating. Isn’t it, old fellow?’

“Hawley, thus addressed, came out of his brown study heavily and unwillingly. He answered his friend sulkily and abruptly, ‘Tea? Thanks, I don’t drink tea. Tea’s not in my line.’

“Anticipating the hospitable suggestion that was naturally to be expected from the lady of the house, I rose from my seat. The nearest way to the drawing-room bell lay through the drawing-room window. I was about to take that way when Hoell interposed.

“‘Stop! Don’t ring for the butler.’ He addressed himself, with a return of the old officious eagerness to be of use, to Hawley. ‘Half a dozen paces from here to the dining-room window,’ he said. ‘Half a dozen paces from the window to the dining-room sideboard. Plenty of materials on that sideboard for the compounding of the cool yet potent mixture that’s more in your line than tea. As a compounder of the squash alcoholic—widely different to the acid temperance variety of the beverage—the present speaker defies competition. And the present speaker begs to place his services unreservedly at your disposal.’

“He got out of his chair, without waiting for Hawley’s reply, with such haste and eagerness that he stumbled and would have fallen if I had not caught him by the elbow. Slight as the shock was that accompanied the mishap, it was sufficient to unnerve him—to bring the perspiration out in dull beads upon his sallow temples, and to cause the hand with which he beckoned Hawley and pointed out the way to tremble visibly.

“No one opposed his wish. If others felt as I felt towards him at that moment, they recognized in Hoell’s whimsical proposal a fresh testimony to the goddess of his heart and the gen-

erosity of his nature. Slight as the offer of service might have been considered, it was significant, in my eyes, of Hoell's heroic determination to bury the wrongs endured in the cruel past in deep oblivion—to hold out again, and once for all, the hand of manly forgiveness to his old oppressor. Heartily admiring him, as I did at that moment, I involuntarily glanced towards Mrs. Kavanagh, seeking in her face a response to the feeling that, I doubt not, was expressed in my own. I met with none. The deadly paleness of her complexion, the fixed and awful tensivity of the look which I encountered, nearly betrayed me into an open expression of alarm. But Hawley spoke at that instant and stopped me.

“‘Upon my soul, I’m obliged to you!’ he returned, speaking to Hoell, but not looking at him. ‘Upon my soul, I don’t know why you should take the trouble!’

“He considered with himself a moment, sitting in his chair. Then he got up and shook himself, after the fashion of a clumsy Newfoundland dog. Peg, peg! went Hoell’s crutches over the old-fashioned pavement of red tiles. Tramp, tramp! sounded Hawley’s heavy footsteps, keeping time. Together they entered the dining-room by one of the windows that open on the terrace, and were lost to sight.”

END OF THE EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

CHAPTER XX.

ON THE BRINK.

THE cloth was already laid for dinner. A man-servant was in the act of replacing in the centre of the table a heavy old-fashioned silver flower-stand, laden with late roses, trailing ferns, and sweet-smelling verbenas. He took his empty plate-basket and withdrew as the gentlemen entered the room.

The sombre cloud that rested upon Hawley showed no signs yet of lifting away. He sat down, sullenly and wearily, in the old-fashioned high-backed chair usually occupied by the master

of the house. He rested his elbow upon the table and his head upon his hand. He looked out, absently, beyond the terrace into the garden.

The sideboard, with its glittering array of silver and cut-glass, was behind him. He heard the dull sound of Hoell's crutches moving over the carpet. He heard the clinking of decanters and the cool tinkling of lumps of ice against the sides of the tumbler. He heard the hissing of the aerated liquid as it foamed into the glass. He heard the lumps of sugar drop in one by one, and the sound of the spoon stirring the cool drink, as the crippled man completed his self-appointed task. But, under the influence of the strange lethargy that possessed him, he never stirred or looked round.

The crutches stumped woodenly over the carpet again. They halted behind his chair. He started and lifted his heavy eyes. He took from the hand that offered it on a little salver a tall tumbler, frothing and full to the brim. He lifted it to his lips, but before it touched them he lowered it, and his hand sank until it rested on his knee. He rested his head on his other hand, again, and looked out over the garden as absently as before.

"Come, come," said Hoell's voice behind him. "Don't you drink?"

Hawley roused himself. "My head's muddled; I'm not myself to-day." He burst into a short laugh. "Come, I'll put a case to you," he said. "Suppose a man has set his heart on doing a certain thing. Suppose his purpose has been a settled purpose, and his determination a fixed determination, for years—a dozen years or more. And suppose it to have come to this, that when he has only to put out his hand to effect that purpose and carry out that determination, he finds that he doesn't know his own mind. Should you call that man a confounded idiot or shouldn't you? If you did, you'd be in the right." He ended with another short laugh. He raised the tumbler to his lips again. "Obliged to you!" he said, and nodded. "Your health!" He drank. "There's a queer taste about this brew of yours. No; on second thoughts I'm mistaken. The queerness is about me!" He emptied the tumbler, and set it on the table with a bang. He got out of the chair in another moment, and stretched himself. "By George!" he said. "This stuff of yours is the right sort of stuff, after all. No more muddle—no more indecision—my

head's as clear as a bell. I know what I've got to do—and I'm going to do it!"

The servant re-entered the room. He addressed himself respectfully to Hawley.

"A message from Sir Philip Lidyard, sir. He's waiting with the mare and the dog-cart for you."

"The mischief he is!" retorted Hawley. "Say all right, I'm coming, will you?" He followed the man to the door. He looked back over his shoulder as he set his foot upon the threshold. Yielding to some secret overmastering impulse, he turned back into the room.

The crippled man sat in the chair that he had vacated. His arms hung listlessly over the arms of the chair; his head was sunken on his shapeless breast. The sallow color of his complexion had faded to an ashen gray, his eyes stared vacantly at a spot upon the carpet at his feet. Slight spasms of trembling shook him from time to time.

Hawley came near to him—called him by his name. As Hoell moved, slightly, and turned his face towards him, the other recoiled.

"Let me call somebody—let me get you something. You're faint—you're in pain! What is it?"

Hoell shaded his face with his hand. He shook his head from behind that shelter. "Nothing!" he said, faintly and brokenly. "I want nothing. Heat overcomes me sometimes like this. It's the heat."

Hawley came a step or two nearer. "Look here!" he broke out, eagerly and hesitatingly. "I want to speak to you, Brinnilow. There's something—" He hesitated again. "Something I've got to say. It's about the time when we were boys together at school. It's got to do with something that happened there. Something that left its mark upon you for life. And upon me, too!"

The other answered back, in a voice that was little better than a whisper: "What of it?"

"I'm not a sensitive fellow, but a rough fellow," Hawley went on. "I'm not given to wasting my time in regretting this, that, and the other action, done in the past. Done once is done for always. No use crying over spilt milk, and so forth. But if you'll believe me, what I did then I've repented—ever since!"

If it had been possible to undo what I did that day, I'd have undone it! If it cost me twenty years of my life! Before God!"

He struck the chair vehemently with his heavy hand as he spoke, and the huddled-up figure in it seemed to grow more distorted and shapeless than ever.

"When we met, with the memory of that black wrong between us; when you gave your hand to me that night, it cut me, though I'm not a feeling fellow," went on Hawley, "to think that you could show yourself such a generous fellow in spite of everything. And I'm going to ask you to be more generous still! I'm going to ask you to give me your hand again—I'm going to ask you to say, 'Hawley, I forgive you!'"

No answer from the crouching figure in the chair.

"It's a good deal to ask," continued Hawley, "but it means a good deal to me. One of these days, when I'm lying—who knows where?—waiting for the end that some people think is only the beginning, I shall be glad to remember that those words were spoken, and you mightn't be sorry, afterwards, yourself, to think you said them! So—"

He was coming nearer with his own hand outstretched, when the figure in the chair sprang up and warded him off—in terror, and with loathing, as it seemed—and shrieked out, "No! No!"

Hawley went, without another word, to the door. He opened it. Upon the threshold he looked back for the last time. "Natural—only natural!" he said to himself, audibly. "I should have done the same thing—if I had been in *his* place! Better far to be in his place than in mine to-day!" The door closed softly behind him. He was gone.

Hoell's arms fell helplessly upon the table. His head dropped upon them. He cried out in agony, "Oh, Hawley! Hawley!" He broke out into an hysterical passion of sobs and tears.

Some one entered noiselessly by the window. Some one came to him, silently and swiftly. Some one touched him on the shoulder—Mrs. Kavanagh! He knew who it was even before he raised his heavy head and turned his marred and swollen face upon her. And the breathless interrogation that her look conveyed was answered by him, mutely, with a gesture of the hand. "Have you done it?" might have been the question, and the answer, "Yes! Oh, God forgive me! Yes!"

She bleached and shuddered and shrank from him. He saw it with a pitiful surprise. "She's afraid of me!" he said to himself, drearily. "She shudders at the touch of me! She, who made me what I am!"

She mastered herself with a visible effort. She drew near to him again. "'Afraid of you?' I'm not afraid of you! What are you thinking of, to fancy—?" She stopped, as the creeping horror gained upon her once more. She whispered, with white lips and almost inaudibly, "Will it be soon? How long before—*that*—happens?"

From the distance came faintly the chime of a clock, striking the hour of seven. It was a musical clock, and upon the last stroke followed a tinkling little melody. In the stillness not a note of it was lost. As the tiny outgush of sound subsided, he answered her, with a catching of the breath, "In three hours."

Her arms dropped heavily at her sides. She repeated after him, mechanically, "In three hours." She considered a moment. "How many minutes are there in three hours?" she muttered to herself. "A hundred and eighty! How many seconds?" She raised her hands; she counted on her fingers. "It's like a horrible sum!" she burst out, loudly and recklessly. "Take three hours from time. Take a hundred and eighty minutes from three hours. Take so many seconds out of a hundred and eighty minutes. And take *him* from life! Ha, ha, ha!"

Hoell rose up out of his chair. He moved to her side. He caught her hand in his, and crushed it in a gripe so strenuous that it forced from her a cry of pain. "Be silent! Do you want to drive me crazy? Do you want to make me hate you? You, whom I—" He let go her hand. The frenzy died out of his eyes. "I must be crazy already to speak to you in such a tone!" he said, humbly. "Could I be in my right senses and hurt you as I did just now? Make allowances for me. Forgive me, and let me take your hand again. I won't hurt it *this* time."

She gave him her hand. He took it and lifted it to his lips, and put it to his heart; he sighed bitterly and looked at her with sad, puzzled wonder. "I don't understand it!" he broke out, "I don't understand it! Try again! Speak to me—let me hear your voice!"

She spoke a few words. He listened, and shook his head.

“Do you know what your voice has been to me since the day I heard it first? Heavenly music sounding in my ears! Shall I tell you what your touch has been to me? Fire, subtle, electric fire, running along my veins to thrill and burn and sting and madden me with unspeakable rapture! You spoke to me just now—and the music was all jarred and broken; you touch me—at this moment—and your touch strikes a chill to my heart that is like the chill of death!” He dropped her hand for the second time. He whispered to himself, “Is this retribution? Has my punishment begun already—and in *that* way?” He paused, as though waiting for a reply, and then whispered again, as though echoing the answer made to him by some unearthly voice, “*Yes!*”

He moved from her then, with another bitter sigh. Slowly, painfully, he halted to the door. He went out without a backward look and left her.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“SELBRIGG HALL, *October 5th.*”

“WE dined that evening—I refer to the evening upon which the ball took place—at half-past seven instead of, as usual, at eight. The ladies withdrew before dessert, in the interests of their toilets. It is enough to say that I had inducted myself into the dress-suit made by the Norwich tailor, and that I was to the full as uncomfortable in it as I had expected to be. But the family credit was upheld, and the persons whom I had desired to gratify were gratified, and so my sufferings were not undergone for nothing. When my niece reappeared in the drawing-room, fresh from the hands of her maid, and looking, if possible, more charming than ever, in the newest of new ball dresses, she subjected me to a rigorous inspection, and pronounced her favorable verdict on my appearance in the following words: ‘You are an old darling, and look perfectly civilized and distinguished enough to set all the young ladies in the county dying to dance with you. Don’t be surprised if, before

the evening is over, I insist upon dancing with you myself.' She gave my cravat a final twitch, took her bouquet—Philip's present—which I had obediently held while the finishing touches were being conferred upon my toilet, thanked me with a kiss, and fluttered to the looking-glass. She surveyed the delightful image that confronted her there with an ingenuous delight in her own fresh youth and beauty that made me smile. 'Do I look nice?' she burst out, frankly, catching the reflection of the smile in the glass. 'Does my dress become me? Ah, your eyes said yes, just now; I should know better than to believe you if your tongue said no!' She slipped her hand confidentially underneath my arm and raised her lips to my ear. 'Shall I tell you why I have taken so much pains with myself?' she whispered. 'Shall I tell you why it pleases me to see in your face that my trouble has not been wasted? There will be plenty of pretty young ladies at the ball to-night, and your niece would be glad, for her own vain reasons, to look prettier than the prettiest of them all. Why? Because I don't want Philip to repent of his choice when he looks at other girls—I want him to congratulate himself upon it when he looks at me. Remember this, Uncle George, and when we are all packed into the carriage, in which we have got to drive three miles to our destination, be careful with your legs, for heaven's sake!' She kissed me again, upon my undertaking to keep those extremities in a state of rigid subordination, caught up her wonderful skirts, and waltzed out of the room in a swirl of lace-edged petticoats and a burst of exuberant good spirits. I followed more sedately. We found the carriage already at the door, and my brother engaged, with the assistance of the butler, in struggling into his overcoat. He shook his head at me, as the operation was completed; he protested, in the tone of a man who has unjustly been deprived of his after-dinner slumber, against the fashionable lateness of the hour fixed for the commencement of the ball. 'Dreadful nuisances, these night entertainments! If we were as sensible in these days as our great-grandfathers were in theirs, we should be arriving home about this time, instead of setting out.' Upon which his daughter responded, taking him familiarly by the chin with one hand, while she turned up his coat-collar with the other:

“And then I should be wanting to sit up all night and talk

everything over, as my great-great-grandmothers used to do. So think yourself lucky, darling, that you were born in the present century instead of in the one before it, and don't grumble any more.'

"She turned her bright, laughing face to me, leaving a reflection of its brightness on my brother's, and bent her shoulders to receive the light wrap which I had taken from the servant, as Mrs. Kavanagh appeared at the upper end of the hall. She wore a magnificent dress of white velvet, with glimpses of silver embroidery about the bosom, and in the folds of the skirt, and upon the borders of the sweeping train. She was wearing all her diamonds, and while her beauty impressed me more powerfully than it had ever done before, it made me think—I can't tell why—of a pale, heaving sea, with the moonlight upon it, brooding in the troubled silence that prevails before the breaking of a storm. Her elderly maid followed, carrying a fur-lined cloak upon her arm, which she seemed to be vainly endeavoring to persuade her mistress to put on. But Mrs. Kavanagh took no more heed of her, or of any of us, than if she had been a woman walking in a dream. In silence she passed through our midst and entered the carriage. Rosalind and her father followed. As I was about to enter, the elderly maid thrust the cloak upon me.

"'It's as much as my mistress's life is worth to go out without her wraps on a chill night like this,' the woman said, doggedly. 'Try and persuade her, sir, to put it on.'

"I got into the carriage, duly observing my promise to Rosalind with regard to the disposal of my legs. As the vehicle moved on, the light from the lodge, flashing in upon us as we drove through the lower gates, showed me, for an instant, plainly, my sister-in-law's face. It was curiously rigid and set, and with the same strange air of preoccupation upon her that I had noticed before, she was staring out of the carriage-window. Recalling the scruples of her maid, I touched my niece's hand and gave the cloak to her. She attempted to draw it round Mrs. Kavanagh's bare shoulders. My sister-in-law submitted absently to the daughterly attention, and let it drop from them again. Rosalind attempted to remonstrate. Mrs. Kavanagh's only answer was to let down the window. She did this with the impatience of a woman suffering from unbearable heat, though, in leaning forward to assist her, my hand touched hers, and the deadly coldness of its contact

almost startled me. Nobody spoke—I don't know why—during the remainder of the drive. It could not have been completed in a silence more profound if we had been bound to a funeral instead of to a merrymaking.

“Lidyard Chase, in its gala aspect, presented features in common with other establishments similarly abandoned to festivity. There was a crowd in the hall, there was a crush upon the staircase, a mob upon the landing, and a scrimmage in the ball-room. The county had been invited to do honor to the occasion, and the county had come with its wives and daughters. The best-bred backs and bosoms to be found within a circuit of fifty miles in extent were upon view, and scarcely a dress was to be seen but upon its own mute evidence might be judged to have trailed through the best part of a London season.

“‘My Lady’ had done the thing thoroughly. The avenues were tastefully illuminated; the rooms were beautifully decorated; the conservatories were converted into shady flirtation bowers, agreeably warmed by hot-air pipes, and prudently cooled with blocks of ice. So many young people were pursuing botanical investigations in these quarters that the presence of a middle-aged person like myself seemed unnecessary. I went back to the ball-room, and amused myself by looking about me.

“The band was playing a German waltz, but the waltz that was popular in my young days has gone out of date like everything else. Some of these couples cultivated a swooping movement, others skated, while many went as if on rockers. But the step most in vogue in this present year of grace can hardly be an exhausting one, because it is almost imperceptible. Its votaries make little corners for themselves—miniature ball-rooms in quiet nooks—and pursue the cult therein with grave, unsmiling enthusiasm. A modern young lady doesn't put her hand upon her partner's shoulder, as she used to do in those obsolete times that I remember, and dance as if she liked it. No! She curls about his elbow; she reposes upon his bosom; she twines herself about him as the ivy of the simile twines about the oak, and lets herself be carried very slowly round and round in the wrong direction, to the accompaniment of the band.

“I leaned against the wall and looked on idly at the revolving dancers, the animated groups of talkers, the serried ranks of chaperons and wall-flowers ranged along the border-land of crimson car-

pet that framed in the shining floors, while old memories arranged and rearranged themselves before my mental vision like the constantly shifting glass patterns in a kaleidoscope. Foremost rose the image of Rosalind's dead mother, in all the tender grace and sweetness of her early girlhood, and I found my heart beating when, for an instant, the slight figure of my niece passed before me, leaning on her lover's arm, as it used to beat long, long ago at the merest hint of the presence, at the slightest sound of the voice, or the fragrance of the flowers worn in the dress of the object of my boyish adoration. Heaven only knows how far away I was from the present when an exuberant voice addressed me, a combination of perfumes overwhelmed me, a ponderous feminine presence overshadowed me; a large crimson fan, adorned with incrustated masses of a black, shiny substance, vaguely suggestive of smashed beetle, tapped me smartly on the arm. I looked up, and knew that I had fallen into the clutches of Lady Lidyard.

"Courtesy towards my hostess forbade my avoiding the doom which I felt to be impending by instant flight. I bore with meekness the brunt of the reproaches that were heaped upon my head for neglect of the duties incumbent upon me as a bachelor and a dancing man. I submitted to be borne along in 'My Lady's' train, in a condition of open-eyed somnambulism which rendered active volition impossible. I returned to consciousness with a hazy vision of something yellow before me, and a distinct impression that I was engaged to dance a quadrille with Lady Butterworth.

"Over the greater part of what ensued I must beg permission to draw the veil of the conventional novelist. It is enough to say that I went into that quadrille a sturdy, self-respecting individual of middle age and independent opinions, and came out of it a comparatively crushed and broken creature. Mrs. Dabb-Hendley opposed us. Her partner was a bald-headed personage of bland aspect, who had previously been pointed out to me as one of the Chief Commissioners of Lunacy for the county. It struck me as, in the intervals of the figure, I glanced across and became aware that Mrs. Dabb-Hendley was explaining her views, that he must have made a very good commissioner indeed. For he accepted all her expressed opinions with regard to the political and social ruin in which the United Kingdom must infallibly become involved in the course of a century or so, if its entire female population cannot be awakened to a sense of the necessity

of scotching the snake, precisely as he might have accepted the assurances upon the authority of a demented female patient belonging to the County Asylum, that she was Pope Joan, and the crack of doom might be confidently expected on the day after to-morrow.

"Lady Butterworth was not behindhand in the matter of her own views. I learned from her how many ladies are prepared, in the event of Home Rule ultimately getting its own way, to rise upon their domestic hearths and expire in the cause of order, and the effort to stem the torrent of Radicalism that may then be expected to overwhelm our native country, with the banner of the Daffodil in their grasp, and the clarion cry, 'Crown and Constitution,' upon their lips. It was wonderful to see how she and Mrs. Dabb-Hendley disapproved of each other, and how they mutually enjoyed the manifestation of that disapproval. It was more than wonderful to see how other people kept their heads and their places when I got so inextricably involved in the labyrinths of that quadrille.

"I have no distinct recollection of how it began or where it ended. I know that I took Lady Butterworth for a short walk, and then turned her round by both hands upon the pivot of her own majestic proportions, while the bald-headed Commissioner of Lunacy did the same by Mrs. Dabb-Hendley. I have an indistinct recollection of taking both these ladies for another short walk to see the commissioner, and subsequently of standing isolated, with an irresistible inclination to twist one leg round the other, while he conducted them on another brief excursion to see *me*. Complete delirium overtook me at the juncture of the Ladies' Chain. The more the others endeavored to set me right, the more I blundered. It was an inexpressible relief to me, in the state of bodily and mental prostration at which I had arrived, when the last figure came to an end. I deposited Lady Butterworth upon the nearest seat and escaped from the ball-room.

"The hall-door stood widely open as I came down-stairs. One glance served to show me that the solitude and quiet I wanted were not to be got by going out that way. Grooms were gossiping, while they waited, with the servants of the house; carriages were crashing to and fro upon the gravel of the drive. The glass doors at the other end of the hall stood open, too—I could feel the cold draught from them blowing on my face. I went out by the glass doors.

"The stillness and the darkness of the night were intensified by their contrast with the scene I had just quitted. Imperfectly acquainted as I was with the topography of the house and grounds, I could only feel my way. The gravel which at first had crackled under my feet gave way to velvety turf. A flight of steps succeeded. I went down the steps and found myself on the gravel again. High, square-cut hedges rose at either hand, and made the blackness, if possible, more profound. Ghostlike statues and dismal urns glimmered at intervals out of shadowy recesses. Lidyard Chase, in common with many other mansions built in the beginning of the sixteenth century, possesses a garden laid out in the funereal and obsolete style of taste which our ancestors agreed to call Italian. My aimless walk had led me into the Italian garden.

"I walked on, enjoying the coolness, and calculating the chances presented by the brooding, starless sky, against the possibility of a dry drive home. When the end of the walk was reached, I found myself upon the borders of an open space. My eyes had become more accustomed to the darkness, or perhaps the darkness had become less intense. It was plain to me that I stood upon the borders of a circular grass-plat, a central point from which, as from an axis, gravel paths shut in by yew hedges, like the path I had traversed, radiated at intervals like the spokes of a wheel. The centre of the grass-plat was occupied by a pedestal—perhaps upholding a sun-dial, and beside it and partly leaning against it, stood a white figure, that of a woman in flowing draperies, which at the first sight I supposed to be sculptured, like the other figures in the recesses, out of stone. The fact of the face being partly turned away from me, and a light covering veil or scarf being thrown about the head, aided the delusion. I had no suspicion that a living woman stood before me until I saw the figure move and heard it sigh. In the surprise of the discovery I drew back into the shelter of the yew-hedge upon my left hand. The lady had come out, like myself, for fresh air and solitude—it might not be agreeable to her to find that she was not alone. I had actually retreated half a dozen steps, treading as silently as I could, and keeping in the shadow of the hedge, when something happened which brought me to a sudden standstill. The lady spoke. And her voice was the voice of Mrs. Kavanagh.

“‘How much longer before the end?’ she said. ‘How much longer before I go mad with the suspense and the horror of it? How—!’ She broke off abruptly. She turned her head and called out harshly into the darkness that covered me, ‘What was that? Who’s there?’

“I could not have answered her if my life had depended on it, so violent was the beating of my heart. Great God! in what terrible jeopardy did the woman stand? What unsuspected depths of passion and despair, existing in her soul and hidden behind the veil of her outward composure, had not that voice, speaking out of the heart of the midnight, revealed to me?

“The shock that had paralyzed my faculties for the moment, in keeping me absolutely still, allayed the suspicions which a chance movement or sound had previously awakened. ‘Wrong,’ I heard her say to herself; ‘no one there.’ She shivered. ‘A cold night,’ she said. ‘Best to go in. How do I know what may not be happening at this moment, while I stand here?’ She moved across the grass-plat in my direction. In another moment she hurried by, passing so close to me that the skirts of her dress brushed over my feet, and the warm fragrance of her hair and her breath reached me where I stood in the shadow.

“I waited a few moments to recover myself before following her back to the house.

“Upon the threshold of the glass door, as I entered, lay a scrap of something white. I found it to be a lady’s handkerchief upon picking it up. The central piece of cambric had been torn in strips, and the bordering of lace was rent in many places. The faint, subtle perfume that exhaled from the handkerchief told my nostrils to whom it belonged, even before the familiar monogram of ‘C. K.’ embroidered in the corner, presented itself to my eyes. I put the handkerchief in my pocket and went upstairs.

“A group of gentlemen had gathered on the landing, just outside the door of the ball-room. The band was playing a lively galop, but I distinguished through the music the sound of voices raised in angry dispute. One of the disputants was Mr. Hawley. I recognized him instantly though his back was turned towards me—there being no mistaking the square head and the powerful physique of the man. He talked loudly and incessantly—he gesticulated like a man in a high state of excitement and offence;

and Sir Philip Lidyard, who made another of the group, appeared to be the person who had offended him.

"Sir Philip's frank, cheerful face was clouded with annoyance. He seemed divided between the desire to continue his ordinary relations with his friend and the necessity of maintaining the opinion, whatever it was, the open expression of which had brought about the difference between them. The other men, to whom Hawley continually appealed, were manifestly anxious to make peace; but Hawley's indignation seemed to be increased rather than assuaged by their representations. 'Friend,' he asseverated loudly, catching up some remark that had been made with the ingenuity of an inconsequently angry man, 'friend be d——d! Does his being my friend give him the right to insult me? How would any one of you like it, in *my* place, if a friend of yours told you, in a lady's presence, that you were not fit to be in her society?' He ended with a short, contemptuous laugh—he swung round upon his heel and presented his full face to my view. It was horribly flushed and swollen, the veins upon his forehead were turgid and prominent, the pupils of his eyes were widely distended and their whites tinged with blood. In that instant Mr. Hawley's unusual excitement, Mr. Hawley's husky volubility, were accounted for—in *my* opinion. Mr. Hawley was drunk!

"Directly he saw me he appealed to me, familiarly and incoherently: 'Come here, old chap, and tell us what *you* think about it. How would you like to be ridden over rough-shod by a man in his own house? You're a man of sense—give us a sensible opinion. I'm engaged to dance this dance with Miss Rosalind Kavanagh. I've been interfered with—I've been treated in a manner which I won't submit to. I've been told that I'm drunk, in the presence of a lady, and that I'd better make myself scarce. I appeal to your judgment. Am I drunk, like a blackguard—or am I sober, like a gentleman? Out with it!'

"My unconquerable dislike of the fellow rose up in me again as he appealed to me. I looked at him with a contempt, I spoke to him with a disgust, which I made no endeavor to disguise. 'You have been drinking—you are not sober at this moment. I consider you absolutely unfit to dance with a lady. You asked for my opinion. Take it for what it is worth.'

"For answer, Hawley burst into a fit of laughter, so wild, so

strained, and so unnatural to hear, that those about him drew back in consternation.

“ ‘So that’s the verdict, is it? I *am* drunk, and I’m *not* fit to dance with a lady! I’ll show you a lady, by God, who won’t refuse to dance with me, drunk as I am! The worse for her if she did! But she won’t—she knows better! Come and see!’

“Before any one of those surrounding could lay a detaining hand upon him, he was gone beyond their reach—gone into the ball-room. The other men stared at each other blankly. Philip and I followed in dismay. As he moved down the long room before us, it was plainly seen that Hawley staggered in his walk, and balanced himself waveringly with movements of his outspread arms. With his swollen face and staring eyes, and the grotesque, unwieldy motions of his heavy figure, I don’t doubt that he presented a dreadful spectacle. People turned round to look at him after he had passed. A hum of surprised conjecture and indignant comment followed him as he went. He became, in less space of time than it takes to write these words, the principal object of attention in the crowded room. But no one interfered with him, and he pursued his uneven course unhindered.

“Philip and I had almost overtaken him when he paused. He uttered a hoarse cry of triumph—rage—I don’t know what emotion that incoherent sound expressed. He pointed before him with his out-stretched hand. And the face that turned to confront him, and was in an instant stricken into a rigidity and fixedness like that of death, was the face of Mrs. Kavanagh. Women cried out in alarm then, and men’s hands were stretched out to stop him; but he thrust them aside and forced his unsteady way along, with that frozen goal in view. He was nearly upon her when he stopped. The dusky red faded out of his face, a dreadful stare of surprise came into his eyes. He put his hand to his head, he reeled and staggered, as if about to fall, and the unnatural dark color rushed up to his forehead again. ‘What’s—this?’ he said, brokenly, between the hoarse, rattling gasps that burst from his laboring chest. ‘I—don’t—understand!’ In another moment, and with a sickening crash, he fell—fell so near to *her* that he caught at and grasped her dress in the vain effort to save himself from falling.

“A babel of voices rose up about us. People, in the imbecile fashion in which people will, crowded about the prostrate figure.

‘He’s in a fit,’ some called out. Others said, as I had said, ‘Disgraceful, the man is drunk!’ Philip, who knelt by him, signalled to me. ‘Send some of the servants here,’ he whispered, earnestly; ‘I want somebody to help me carry him to his room. And tell one of the grooms to take the dog-cart over to Ketton and bring the doctor—Doctor Garland, of Church Lodge—back with him at once.’

“He spoke with a prompt decision and readiness which I should not, under the circumstances, have expected from him. I beckoned one of the servants who were shouldering and peeping at the door, and despatched him with the message to the stables. I returned to the side of the insensible man, and cut with my pen-knife the tightened collar-band which Philip was vainly trying to unfasten. Somebody handed me a glass of water over the heads of the curious, gaping spectators. These retreated a little, for fear of sprinkling, and the next moment closed upon us in a more compact wall than ever. It was obviously necessary, in the interest of the patient, to disperse them, and I succeeded in doing this in a neat speech. ‘Ladies and gentlemen, when a man falls down in a fit, he doesn’t want company—he wants air. And that is the very last thing the charitable people who are most anxious for his well-being think of giving him.’ The shafts of my mild sarcasm penetrated the hide of Society. Society ceased to make a barrier of itself and withdrew, indignant and contemptuous. Philip, the butler, and myself carried Mr. Hawley to his room.

“The experiences of my wandering life have qualified me, after a rough fashion, to render, in case of necessity, the services usually required of an hospital assistant. Such restorative measures as that experience suggested were of no avail. An hour went by and brought the doctor with it. His resources were taxed as unavailingly—his efforts were rewarded with as little success as my own. The last carriageful of guests drove away, the house became silent. There was no alteration in the stertorous breathing, no fading of the purple discoloration in the face that lay upon the bed, for hours. Gray dawn glimmered through the cracks in the blinds, some loud-voiced clock in the neighborhood was striking the hour of two, when the first indications appeared of a coming change. Philip’s anxious solicitude for his friend accepted the signs as hopeful ones. He touched me, and whispered, ‘He breathes more quietly; he looks more like himself. Thank God,

he's coming round at last!" I looked at *him*. I consulted the doctor, mutely, with another look. That look said, 'Is the change a favorable change?' and the answer conveyed to me in the motion of the doctor's lips was 'No.' The breathing stopped in a little while from then—stopped and went on again, and slackened—and at last ceased altogether. The purple flush sank out of the face, whose outlines were fast becoming set in the rigor of death. There was no struggle, no convulsion, when the end came. I knew that it had come when the doctor bent his ear to the heart for an instant and lifted and dropped the passive hand, and I broke the news to Philip as gently as I could.

"Philip's obstinate hope resisted to the last. 'All over?' he said, blankly, repeating my words. 'I don't understand you.' He appealed to the doctor. The doctor answered him in a few brief words that left no doubt as to their meaning. The blow fell heavily on the young fellow's affectionate heart. In the sincerity of his grief he reproached himself for having failed in loyalty to his dead friend. 'We have known each other for years, sir,' he said, simply, to the doctor, 'and to-night we had a difference, for the first time in both our lives. It was my fault. I misjudged him cruelly, and he resented it. It cuts me to the heart to think I can never ask his pardon—*now!*' The tears ran down his face; he turned aside to hide them, and broke down altogether. What I could say honestly to comfort him, I said then. In a few words I succeeded in rousing him to a sense of the duties devolving upon him in regard to conveying, as gently as possible, the news to Lady Lidyard and the family of the dead man. He ended by leaving the room in the company of the doctor. Pending the arrival of the house-keeper, I was left in sole charge of the chamber of death.

"The blinds rattled, the candles flickered drearily in the chill morning breeze that came through the open windows. The situation seemed, in some inexplicable way, strange and yet familiar to me. My eyes involuntarily turned to that solemn presence there upon the bed, and in an instant I knew why.

"Hawley lay as he had lain when, in the gray of the early morning, waking from my dream, I had seen him lying on the rude wooden bedstead in the room at the inn at Hull. The fancy had seized me then that he was dead. I looked upon him

now with the light of life quenched in him, and as the flickering candle-flame played over his features I might have fancied him asleep. Strive against it as I would, the fascination of that idea drew me resistlessly to his side. He was only partially undressed; his shirt, thrown widely open at the collar, revealed the massive proportions of his throat—revealed to me the plain, old-fashioned gold locket, that once before had attracted my attention, hanging round his neck by its shabby leather string.

“ ‘ *With a kind of superstitious belief that the locket would bring about the end he had in view—did I say that he had made up his mind to hunt her down, if it took him years to do it?—he wore the locket about him night and day.* ’

“ Merciful God! were those words, once uttered in my presence by the living man, repeated now by the stern lips of the dead? No! no! Cold, breathless, and silent, with the silence of the grave, the man whom I had hated lay before me. The Voice that spoke to me was a warning Voice, heard and heeded by me before, in by-gone moments of peril and dread. It spoke again. It said: ‘ *Open the Locket!* ’

“ I obeyed the warning Voice. I opened the locket.

“ It held two portraits—those of a woman and a child; and the face of the woman, at it looked at me from one of the crystal ovals, set in a shining rim, was the face of Mrs. Kavanagh!

“ My heart stopped beating as the dreadful truth burst upon me. My blood ran through my veins like liquid ice, and my hair seemed to rise and bristle on my head. I knew now who was the woman of Hawley’s story—the woman whom he had tracked out and followed down, and upon whom he had meant to wreak retribution, when the uplifted arm had, in the moment of its falling, been stayed by the Hand that moulds the destinies of man at will. The agony that had forced from her those wild words, overheard by me in the garden a few hours before, I comprehended now. I knew now that my dream had been sent to me in forewarning of what was to come. The shadow that she brought with her in the vision had swallowed up and blotted out the brightness of the familiar scenes upon which I and mine had looked from childhood. It was to descend now in reality. It was to obscure an honorable name, and hang like a funeral hatchment over an honest threshold. The hideous blight that had

befouled and empoisoned her life was to befoul and empoison the lives of those two who loved her—how inevitably, how soon, God only knew!

“Consciousness left me for a merciful space. Darkness closed in upon me. How many moments passed before I found myself standing by the window, with the cold wind blowing on my face, I can’t tell. The Voice spoke to me again. ‘*Rouse yourself,*’ it said. ‘*Act while there is time. Hide the dreadful witness of her sin and shame before it bears its silent, overwhelming testimony to other eyes than yours. For the sake of the innocent, if not for the sake of the guilty. Hide it quickly before they come!*’”

“Again I obeyed. I returned to the bedside. I bent over the pillow, and as I did so the dead face seemed to frown at me. I forced my hand to steadiness, my will into volition. I loosened, with the aid of my penknife, the portrait of the woman from the case, and closed the locket, and laid it back upon that pulseless breast. This was done, and the portrait hidden about me, before returning footsteps sounded on the stair.”

CHAPTER XXII.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“I WENT down-stairs. The flaring gas-jets in the corridors; the glimpse that I caught, in passing, of the ball-room, with its faded flowers and brilliant decorations, and the chilly dawn peeping in at the long windows, maintained and strengthened the nightmare-like impression of unreality that haunted me. I undid the fastenings of the hall-door with hands that were clumsy and uncertain—like the hands of a blind man. I went out, walking as a blind man might have walked, into the chill of the gray dawning.

“The loud-voiced stable clock was striking six when I re-entered the house. The butler, carrying a coffee tray, encountered me in the hall. The man looked fagged and jaded, like a man who had been up all night, as, in answer to my inquiry for his

master, he pointed to the library door. The sound of voices, loudly raised in argument or dispute, reached me from within as I touched the door-handle. I hesitated and drew back.

“In the moment of my hesitation the door was opened violently from the inside. Philip appeared on the threshold. The night’s anxiety and fatigue, the shock he had recently sustained, had left their traces upon him in the paleness of his complexion and the disorder of his dress. I had last seen him overwhelmed with grief—the emotion his face and manner betrayed now was of a different kind. Before I could make a movement of resistance, he caught me roughly by the arm, and dragged me into the library.

“The doctor, Mr. Garland, of Church Lodge, Ketton, a keen-looking, thin-lipped, youngish man, who has, within the last few years, succeeded to the practice of the elderly predecessor who prescribed for my measles, and physicked my whooping-cough when I was a boy, was standing by the table. His thin lips were rigidly compressed, there was a spot of red on each of his high cheek-bones. He presented the appearance of a man who had, in the exercise of his professional capacity, been unjustly offended, and who was determined not to prejudice his dignity by the loss of his temper. The horrible nightmare-like sensation still weighed upon my mental and bodily faculties like a chain of lead. I submitted to Philip, when he confronted me with the doctor, and invited the attention of the doctor to myself with a gesture of his hand. With a visible effort at self-control, he addressed Mr. Garland :

“‘Before you go, sir, I should like to hear you repeat in the presence of my friend, Mr. George Kavanagh, what you have said to me. I’m not good at understanding scientific terms, and the more plainly you answer him, the more I shall be obliged to you.’ He turned to me. ‘In the name of my poor friend, now lying dead up-stairs,’ said Philip, ‘I ask you to put a question to the gentleman who attended him professionally in his last hours. A terrible doubt has been insinuated—a horrible conclusion has been arrived at’—his voice broke and faltered, but he steadied it, and went on—‘with regard to the cause of Hawley’s death. Ask the doctor what killed him.’

“I could not frame words to do his bidding. I could only look at Mr. Garland. Mr. Garland answered, as if I had spoken :

“‘There are appearances in the case of Mr. Hawley which might justify the conclusion that death resulted from paralysis of the vital nerve-centres, arising from cerebral suffusion. In plain English, it might be supposed that he died from the breaking of a blood-vessel on the brain. Cases of this kind are not infrequent. Violent excitement—the unfortunate gentleman has been described as laboring under a considerable degree of excitement previous to the seizure—or emotion of any unusual kind—might be attended with such grave consequences. But there are other appearances’—he paused a moment—‘which are less satisfactory, and which, I frankly confess to you, I don’t understand.’

“The room began to whirl round with me. The deadly faintness overpowered me again. I saw nothing steadily or plainly but the doctor’s face. I heard the words he was speaking indistinctly, for the rushing in my ears and the beating of my heart.

“‘You are aware that before a death can be properly registered,’ Mr. Garland continued, ‘it is necessary that a certificate should be obtained from a medical man, testifying that death took place from a specified complaint, an actual casualty, or transpired in the ordinary course of nature. It is useless to disguise—’ He paused again. ‘I regret to say that I cannot conscientiously supply the usual certificate in the case of Mr. Hawley.’

“‘Do you repeat,’ Philip burst out, loudly and vehemently, ‘that you believe him not to have come by his death in a natural way?’

“The tone irritated Mr. Garland. He replied, more sharply than he had yet spoken, ‘I believe him to have come by his death in an unnatural way!’

“‘Give me your answer in the plain words I asked for a minute ago,’ Philip returned, in the same loud, high tone. ‘Do you suspect foul play? Do you believe the case to be a case of murder?’

“Mr. Garland answered, shortly and sharply, ‘Of murder or of suicide.’

“Philip caught me by the arm and shook it roughly. ‘Do you hear what he says? Do you understand him as I understand him, or am I out of my senses?’

“He dropped my arm in another moment. He turned to the

doctor again. 'I ask your pardon, sir, if I offended you just now,' he said, brokenly and deprecatingly. 'The opinion you have expressed horrified me and shocked me. I'm hardly to be blamed if I was betrayed into forgetting myself a few moments ago. How can I entertain the idea that—that my poor friend killed himself? He had no troubles or anxieties to speak of. If he had been in debt or in love, *I* should have known of it. And, with regard to the other supposition—that of his having been—I can't say the horrible word. He didn't bear a grudge against any one—he hadn't an enemy. I don't believe a single creature exists in the world who has got any reason for wishing him out of it.'

"There was a sound of wheels crashing up the gravel drive outside. The hall door bell rang violently a moment later. The unappeased doctor took his hat and went out of the library into the hall. Philip followed him, and I followed Philip mechanically. Mr. Garland spoke to us over his shoulder as he pulled on his gloves. 'They have sent over my gig, as I directed, from Ketton. I shall drive round by the coroner's on my way home. Once I have made the coroner acquainted with the peculiar features presented by this case my professional responsibility ends—and I am heartily glad of it.' He nodded to the butler—the butler opened the hall door. Mr. Garland had got half-way down the steps before he became aware that the vehicle waiting at the bottom of them was not his own property.

"It was a high-bodied, old-fashioned gig. There were two persons in it, one of them wearing a shiny oil-skin cape. Both were policemen. The man who wore the oil-skin cape jumped down from the driver's side. He spoke to the doctor civilly and respectfully: 'Might I ask, sir, whether any unusual occurrence took place here last night?'

"Mr. Garland answered: 'A very sad occurrence. A gentleman, a guest staying in the house, was taken suddenly ill.'

"The policeman said: 'I must trouble you to answer another question, sir. Was the gentleman's illness attended with any deplorable result?'

"The doctor returned, 'With the most deplorable of all results—the gentleman is dead.'

"The driver of the gig had been listening with close attention.

I noticed the reins lying slack on the sweat-streaked neck of the tired animal that drooped between the shafts of the vehicle. I addressed a question to the driver.

“ ‘You have driven some distance?’

“ ‘A matter of nine miles,’ he returned.

“ ‘From Norwich?’

“ ‘From Colegate Street Police-station, Norwich. Might you be acquainted with the name of Brinnilow hereabouts?’

“ The butler answered for me eagerly, ‘Yes, yes! There’s Squire Brinnilow—Mr. Hoell Brinnilow, of Ketton Manor House, hard by the Green.’

“ ‘What like is Mr. Hoell Brinnilow, of Ketton Manor-house—an active, hearty gentleman?’

“ The old servant shook his head. ‘Mr. Hoell Brinnilow goes upon crutches. Mr. Hoell Brinnilow has been a cripple since his youth.’

“ The policeman who had driven the gig exchanged glances with the policeman in the oil-skin cape. Impelled by I don’t know what impulse, I put a question to this man.

“ ‘Has your business anything to do with Mr. Hoell Brinnilow?’

“ The man made answer, stolidly, ‘My business has got to do, first of all, with a confession.’

“ Philip repeated, from behind me, ‘With a confession?’

“ The man reiterated.

“ ‘With a confession of murder. Made at the Colegate Street Police-station, before the inspector on duty, at four o’clock this morning. To be made before a magistrate later on in court.’

“ ‘By whom?’

“ ‘By Mr. Hoell Brinnilow.’”

Book IV.

SLEEPING-TIME.

CHAPTER I.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

“THE RAINBOW INN, NORWICH, *December 20th.*

“MY Journal lies open before me once more. The last lines that my hand traced upon these pages are months old. Christmas Day is close upon us—I wish the anniversary were over and past. Last night, waking from uneasy sleep in the old-fashioned chamber of the quiet inn at which I have taken up my quarters, I heard voices singing under my window. The song was an old one—the burden of it older still: ‘*Peace on earth, good will to men.*’ It is no mere figure of speech when I write here that the words wrung my heart: that I stopped my ears to keep out the heavenly message that sounded—God help and pity all of us!—like some devilish mockery of earthly strife, and human misery and despair!

“The weather has been wild and stormy. Snow has fallen heavily—the iron fetters of a fierce frost hang upon the land. The north-east wind howls and rages. The sea is miles away, and yet, as I lie awake on these savage, gusty nights, I fancy that I hear it booming and roaring, and hurling its inert force desperately against the rugged sandstone cliffs that girdle it, as some condemned prisoner might hurl himself, in wild, despairing agony, against the walls of his prison cell.

“‘As some condemned prisoner—!’

“The pen falls from my hand. My resolution fails me. To recall, to arrange, to set down as clearly and minutely as circumstances will admit, the events which have transpired within these past months—this is the task which I have set myself, the task

which I am unable to fulfil. The newspapers have already told the terrible story; the evidence brought forward at the trial has already been recapitulated, dissected, and commented on from many different points of view by hundreds of reporters' pens. Let the newspapers tell their story here."

THE STORY CONTINUED IN EXTRACTS FROM THE NEWSPAPERS.

I.

* * * * *

"SELDOM has a more tragic tale of cruel wrong and passionate resentment, smouldering concealed for years, only to break out in the fierce lava-glow of active hatred and deadly revenge, been unfolded than that disclosed by the evidence adduced in the trial which has been selected to open the winter proceedings of the Norwich Court of Assizes. Hoell Gordon Brinnilow, the last remaining representative of a well-known county family, self-accused of the murder of Mr. Reginald Hawley, second son of Gen. Carlett Hawley, of Bushill, Surrey, has been tried for that crime, and found guilty by a jury of his fellow-countrymen. The facts of the case, as unfolded in the course of three days' trial at the Norwich Shirehall, in the presence of an overflowing assemblage of spectators, male and female, who crowded the privileged seats and encroached upon the official benches in their eagerness to gather the sensational disclosures which they had been led to anticipate, are these: . . . In the year 18—, the two principal actors in this harrowing drama were fellow-boarders at the old-established public-school of Burnham Green. Reginald Hawley was at that time one of the senior pupils; a man in stature and physical development, if not in years; of a temperament hardy, imperious, and overbearing, and remarkable for personal daring and physical strength. Natures of this cast, before contact with the world have tempered and subdued them, are apt to be tyrannical, and certain it is that, although—if we may judge by the testimony of another fellow-pupil, between whom and the murdered man a strong friendship was formed—a bond which endured into the years of manhood—Hawley was regarded with enthusiastic admiration and hearty regard by many of his school-fellows—there were others who had reason to fear and dread 'The Butcher,' as the young athlete had been nicknamed—it may be in virtue of his sanguine complexion

and his hair, which at that time was of a reddish color; perhaps with reference to qualities less harmless than these. Certain it is that Reginald Hawley entertained a hearty dislike for a junior fellow-pupil named Hoell Gordon Brinnilow, whom, in his capacity of fag—the unwritten laws of the public-school sanction this system of servitude at the present day as much as they did twenty years ago—the elder lad subjected to a merciless system of ill-treatment. For injuries like those endured by the wretched fag there is little or no redress. To boldly denounce and accuse his torturer would have been to render his school existence absolutely unbearable, for the English school-boy's code of honor contains no more inexorable rule than that contained in the words, 'Thou shalt not tell tales.' So the system of brutal oppression on the one hand, and of shrinking submission on the other, continued, until a more cruel outrage than any that had yet been wreaked on the unfortunate boy irrevocably blighted the future of Hoell Brinnilow and seriously prejudiced the prospects of Reginald Hawley, who, as a consequence of the inevitable exposure, was summarily expelled from the school. Years passed. Of the two school-fellows one was a crippled invalid, doomed to pass his days in sedentary inactivity, to suffer constant pain, and to endure a sharper anguish still—that of knowing that but for the bitter injury inflicted on him by a fellow-creature, no darker shadow would have overhung his life than that which falls to the lot of ordinary mortals. Although, by common testimony of many who knew him, the crippled man endured his misfortune with admirable fortitude, being remarkable for the persistent way in which he ignored the fact of his bodily weakness and most apparent deformity. Meanwhile the cause of all this suffering was pursuing at home and abroad a checkered career. He quitted Oxford in his second term, leaving behind him a reputation for extravagance and dissipation; obtained through family interest a commission in a well-known cavalry regiment, and a few years later, becoming involved in certain discreditable money embarrassments, from which General Hawley refused to extricate him, sold his commission, irretrievably quarrelled with his family, and went abroad. The next news received of Mr. Reginald Hawley came from America, where he had adopted, and was said to pursue with credit, the profession of journalist. Later on, when the stormy year of 1870 completed the downfall of the Napoleonic dynasty, we find him fulfilling the du-

ties of war-correspondent, attached to one of the leading New York journals. From 1872 to 1874 he is said to have resided on the Continent, still in pursuance of his occupation as literary purveyor of foreign news, but from that time all trace of him was lost until, in the month of September, 1886, the Russian steamer *Volga* arrived at Hull with Mr. Reginald Hawley as one of the passengers on board her. Once returned to his native country, Mr. Hawley was not slow in communicating with the old school-fellow to whose friendship for the deceased gentleman we have already alluded, and heartily accepted the invitation extended to him by Sir Philip Lidyard, of Lidyard Chase, to shoot over the covers of that extensive county estate, and renew the associations of by-gone days, before again leaving England. The possibility of a meeting transpiring between Mr. Hawley and the unfortunate victim of his by-gone oppressions did occur to Sir Philip Lidyard, but before any steps could be taken to prevent such an encounter the meeting actually took place. And on that occasion the conduct of the unfortunate master of Ketton Manor-house was distinguished by the utmost delicacy, good-breeding and self-restraint. If any resentment yet smouldered in his breast against the perpetrator of the cruel deed which had wrecked his life and blighted his prospects forever, Hoell Brinnilow concealed it, and gave the right-hand of good-fellowship to the man who had wronged him. Mr. Hawley and Hoell Brinnilow met and continued to meet on terms of apparent cordiality, the last occasion upon which they held any communication being on the afternoon of October 1st, when the house in which they had first met, Selbrigg Hall, the seat of Colonel Kavanagh, J.P. for this county, received them again as guests. Hoell Brinnilow's conduct to Mr. Reginald Hawley was again distinguished by the utmost courtesy and attention. Mr. Hawley, happening to reject the offer of a cup of tea with the remark that he disliked the ordinary infusion of the herb, the suggestion that he should try some other form of liquid refreshment was heartily seconded by Brinnilow, who even proposed to mix for him an effervescing drink of which he alone held the secret of preparation, and, upon Mr. Hawley's acceptance of the offer, accompanied him to the dining-room for the purpose of procuring the materials necessary to its composition. The two men were alone together in the room; no third person was witness to what transpired between them. A few

minutes later, Mr. Hawley drove back to Lidyard Chase, in the company of Sir Philip Lidyard; and the prisoner, somewhat abruptly, and without returning to the drawing-room, left the Hall and returned to the Manor-house.

“The evening of that date (October 1st) had been selected by Lady Lidyard as the occasion of a ball, to which the leading members of the county aristocracy, and the most intimate of her ladyship’s more distant acquaintances had been invited. The ball, we may say, had been projected in honor of the formation of a marriage engagement between the owner of Lidyard Chase and the only daughter and sole heiress of Colonel Kavanagh. The beauty and the popularity of the young lady, together with the fact of her being the heroine of the occasion, caused her hand to be eagerly sought for by would-be partners, and among those aspirants who obtained the desired favor was Mr. Hawley. Later on, when the gentleman returned to claim his partner for the allotted dance, Miss Kavanagh (we have it on the testimony of Sir Philip Lidyard, who was one of the witnesses at the trial) was rendered uneasy and alarmed by the change in his voice, face, and general demeanor, which Sir Philip Lidyard and many other observers could hardly fail to ascribe to an intemperate indulgence in the pleasures of the champagne buffet. Remonstrance on the part of Sir Philip was met by indignant protest on the part of Mr. Hawley. Dispute raged high, and might have ended in blows but for the tact and cool good-temper of the former. Finally, Mr. Hawley burst through the crowd of witnesses which had gathered about himself and his opponent, and in the very act of re-entering the ball-room was seized with a fit, the immediate symptoms of which seemed to be of an apoplectic nature. He was removed to his room, and a local medical attendant, Dr. Garland, of Church Lodge, Ketton, was summoned to his bedside. Attempts at re-animation, however, proved futile, and in the short space of three hours from the time of the seizure the unfortunate gentleman breathed his last.

“Up to this moment, not one of the anxious watchers by the bedside of the stricken man had entertained the slightest doubt that the illness of Mr. Hawley proceeded from other than natural causes. Sir Philip Lidyard had barely rallied from the shock conveyed to him in the news of his friend’s death, when the outspoken testimony of Dr. Garland confronted him with that ap-

palling possibility. Certain symptoms apparent in the case—symptoms already detailed at full length in previously published reports of the medical evidence given at the trial—had aroused the suspicions of the doctor, and determined him in the refusal of the usual death certificate until the result of a *post-mortem* examination would have practically settled all doubt as to the cause of Mr. Hawley's sudden death.

“At this juncture, and before Sir Philip Lidyard had given utterance to his first emotions of horror and surprise, a messenger arrived in haste from the Colegate Street Police-station, Norwich, with the news that Mr. Hoell Brinnilow had voluntarily given himself into custody as the murderer of Reginald Hawley.

“By poison—the unhappy creature averred—the deed had been committed. In the subsequent *post-mortem* examination by Dr. Garland and Mr. Bond, it was ascertained that there was a marked degree of cerebral effusion and turgescence; that the lungs of the deceased were considerably congested, and that whereas the other internal organs were healthy, the pharynx and œsophagus showed signs of an irritation, which was also apparent in the intestines. Decomposition resulted with extraordinary rapidity, and this fact, coupled with the other appearances, led to the inference that the death of Mr. Hawley resulted from the felonious administration of a vegetable deliriant poison, no less deadly than atropia, the active principle of belladonna.

“Towards the discovery of this alkaloid, therefore, the efforts of the distinguished London chemist—to whom, not content with the results of his own experiments, Dr. Garland forwarded a jar containing portions of the viscera, etc., of the deceased—were directed. The microscope, neither in the hands of Dr. Garland nor of the expert furnished any confirmation in the shape of a stray seed, a minute fragment of leaf tissue, or a portion of a berry, to prove that atropine was the toxic agent employed in the removal of Mr. Hawley. And the result of the analysis proved even more discouraging. True it is there are no marked chemical reactions by which the presence of atropia can be identified in the body of man or animal. But one well-known physiological test exists, which experience has proved wellnigh infallible. This test, as Dr. Garland unwillingly acknowledged at the trial, when applied by him, failed to produce the result anticipated. The experiment made by the London analyst was

only one shade more successful. In the absence of any proofs resulting from this test, several well-known medical men, of wide metropolitan and provincial experience, did not hesitate to come forward with the published conviction that Mr. Reginald Hawley's death was not owing to the action of poison at all, and that the voluntary confession of Mr. Hoell Brinnilow had been made when that unfortunate gentleman was laboring under the influence of an insane delusion.

"In the face of this independent testimony, and as the result of the inquiries before the coroner and the magistrates, and primarily, of the confession alluded to above, Mr. Hoell Brinnilow was committed to jail, and, on the opening day of the Norwich Winter Assizes, was placed in the dock upon the capital charge. No answer being made by him to the indictment, a plea of not guilty was entered by the learned judge, and the trial proceeded.

"The prosecution was, as may be inferred, based upon facts revealed in the prisoner's statement, made under due caution before a magistrate, on the day subsequent to the Colegate Street confession. According to this statement—to all particulars of which the prisoner steadily adhered throughout the trial—the idea of putting Mr. Hawley out of the world was not the result of the vengeful brooding of years, but occurred to him shortly after their first meeting at Selbrigg Hall, upon which occasion it will be remembered that Hoell Brinnilow conducted himself, in the opinion of several persons who were present, with great delicacy and admirable self-control. The diabolical suggestion once entertained, the means whereby the vengeful plan might be carried out presented themselves. The prisoner obtained poison; how, or where, or of what nature he steadily refuses to disclose, and waited for an opportunity to administer it. To quote his own words, he 'carried the bottle in his pocket for several days.' Several days, during which he maintained the semblance of cordial feeling towards the unhappy fellow-creature whom he intended to destroy! And last, on the eve of the ball at Lidyard Chase, the opportunity came. In the presence of Hoell Brinnilow, Mr. Hawley expressed his dislike of tea. In the hearing of several persons, three of whom—Miss Rosalind Kavanagh, Mr. George Kavanagh, and Sir Philip Lidyard—appeared as witnesses at the trial, the prisoner offered his services in the concoction of the effervescing drink already mentioned. He accompanied Mr.

Hawley into the dining-room, as before related. There, according to the prisoner, Mr. Hawley sat down in a chair with his back to the sideboard at which the deadly draught was mixed for him. The contents of the bottle were slyly transferred to the tumbler, which was then handed to the victim. He drank some of it and said 'it had a queer taste,' but afterwards emptied the glass. 'Then he got up,' goes on the statement, 'and went to the door. But at the door he turned back and asked me to shake hands with him, and say that I forgave him for the injury he had done me when we were boys at school. I said No! then; but afterwards, when I knew that he was dead, I resolved to give myself up to justice.'

"Having administered the nameless vegetable alkaloid, which was effectually to rid him of the enemy who had sought his forgiveness in vain, Hoell Brinnilow returned to his residence, the Manor-house, Ketton Green. He went by way of the common, instead of taking the short-cut through the Hall plantation (we quote from the statement again), and on the common threw the bottle away. Search has been made for this *pièce de conviction*, but without success.

"Once arrived at home, we suppose that he waited, in an agony of guilty suspense, for the news that should assure him of the success of his design. According to the evidence of the butler, William Jarvis, who was in the service of the prisoner's father before the prisoner was born, and seemed broken down by the weight of the disgrace which had fallen upon a once honorable family—he did not go to bed. 'Mr. Hoell sat up late in the study,' said the old servant, 'and the house-keeper and I sat up, too, knowing his ways. At half-past twelve, or thereabouts, some one rang at the gate. It turned out to be a groom from The Chase, who had been sent to fetch the doctor in a hurry, and had stopped at the wrong house. A gentleman staying there on a visit had been taken with a fit, and was terrible bad—he seemed like dying, the man said. Some time after that the house-keeper took my master's supper into the study. He wasn't there. He must have let himself out quietly, we said, and gone to take a little exercise in the cool night air. And as time went by and he didn't come back, we made sure that, being an impulsive gentleman, he had hired a fly—there were several standing outside the Norfolk Arms—and driven to The Chase to make inquiries,

and that, finding things less bad than had been described, he had been persuaded to stop. *I* made so sure of that that *I* never troubled my mind; but Mrs. Weather was uneasy from the beginning.'

" 'Mrs. Weather' is another old domestic, whose evidence was not taken at the trial upon sufficient reasons.

"The butler's theory about the hired fly proved incorrect. While William Jarvis and the house-keeper waited for their master, that master, in a state of unnatural excitement, the inference of which alone may account for the performance by a cripple of such a feat, was proceeding to The Chase, a distance of some four miles, on foot, or, rather, on crutches. What he did there is not known. Probably he hung about the gates, or skulked in the shadow of the shrubberies, looking up at the lighted windows of the great house, and waiting—waiting in a frenzy of suspense, for some indication of what was passing within. What his actions subsequently were we gather from the testimony of John Willis, a groom in the service of Sir Philip Lidyard, who, as soon as his master had been satisfied beyond doubt that life was really extinct in the body of his friend, was sent into Norwich with the dog-cart, in charge of certain telegraphic messages, which were to be despatched to the relatives of Mr. Hawley as soon as the post-office should open in the morning. The stable clock was striking the quarter to three, according to the witness's account, when he drove through the lodge-gates. The mare in harness, a spirited creature, shied, as a figure 'seemed to rise up by the roadside,' and called in agonized tones to the driver to pull up, for God's sake! The groom did so, and recognized the prisoner. In the witness's own words, 'he spoke in a strange, wailing sort of voice, and asked whether it was true that there was a death at the house. I gave back the answer Yes, and that it had happened scarce an hour ago. He spoke again, all quavering, like an old man, and asked me where I was going. I said to Norwich, nine miles away, on a message for my master. Then the prisoner said he would give me two sovereigns to give him a lift. I asked, How far? He said as far as I was going. I wasn't sorry to have company—it being a lonesome road—so helped him to climb into the trap, which he had, as may be supposed, a good deal of difficulty in doing. He never spoke a word the whole way, and I could hear his teeth chattering, as if he had got the ague. It

was half-past four when we passed the Greenhills Tavern, and when we got into Magdalen Street the prisoner got down, with my help, and thanked me. He gave me the two sovereigns. I noticed that his hand, as it touched mine in giving me the money, was very cold—corpse cold, almost. I drove away then, without looking back to see which way he was going.'

"We know in what direction the steps of the miserable man were bent. Driven to desperation by the torments of remorse, Hoell Brinnilow sought to make the only expiation in his power for the crime which he had committed, we must say deliberately, since the theory of insanity, upon which the defence was mainly based, has been summarily set aside by the decision of the Grand Jury. Amid a scene of excitement, perhaps unparalleled in the records of the trials held in the Norwich Shirehall since its walls arose on the site of the ancient building which was burned to the ground in the middle of the seventeenth century, yesterday's verdict was given. Ladies sobbed and fainted, the eyes of men were wet with emotion as the fragile, shrunken figure of the deformed man was supported to the front of the dock. With a face whose drawn aspect and dreadful pallor might have been likened to that of a corpse, but with unflinching self-possession, Hoell Brinnilow heard the question put to the jurors whether they had agreed, and the returned answer in the affirmative. Then came the solemn verdict of 'Guilty,' and the usual query ensued whether the prisoner had anything to say why the court should not give him judgment to die according to the law. Every ear was eagerly strained to catch the answer that came back as Hoell Brinnilow lifted his head and replied, speaking at first faintly and brokenly, then with greater strength, assurance, and distinctness:

"'I consider the verdict a just verdict. I have nothing more to say.'

"The effect produced by these few words was an electrical one, and the scene in court attained such an emotional pitch, that the usher's reading of the proclamation was completely drowned. Even the judge's accents faltered as he addressed the prisoner in the following terms:—

"'Hoell Gordon Brinnilow, I am called, in the painful exercise of my duty, to pass sentence upon a person found guilty of one of the greatest offences in the sight of God and man—the crime of

deliberate murder. You stand an awful and striking example of the justice of Providence—of that punishment which, sooner or later, never fails to overtake the guilty. You have been compelled by remorse, and the agonies and tortures of a guilty mind, to furnish that evidence against yourself which it was in the power of none to supply, and the guilt which you yourself attested to has been confirmed by the result obtained in the medical examination and analysis of the body of your victim. I trust that every one who hears the awful story of your temptation and your fall will bear in mind that a time will arrive, most probably in this world, most surely in another, when guilt will meet its due punishment. In your unhappy case, that period is already come when you must receive the reward of your crimes. Impelled by the long-cherished desire of vengeance upon one who had injured you, you, under a false and treacherous pretence of kindness and good-will, deliberately formed the design of destroying Reginald Hawley. With this purpose you purchased, or otherwise procured, of a person or persons whose name or names you have resolutely refused to disclose, a vegetable poison so deadly, and, at the same time, so volatile, that, while it destroys human life in a few hours, it leaves comparatively few traces behind by which its nature may be determined. This agent you mingled in the draught which you offered to Mr. Hawley under specious pretence of friendship. Even at that moment there had been time to draw back, when the overtures made by your unhappy victim for forgiveness of the old grievous wrong, inflicted so many years ago, might have softened the most callous of human hearts.' Here the prisoner was observed to shed tears, and his lordship continued: 'So much of secrecy had been observed by you in the procurement of the deadly drug—and in its administration—and so subtle and mysterious were its effects, that if the consciousness of your deed, more poignant and destructive than the draught itself, had not impelled you to disclose your guilty secret, the crime might never have been brought home to you. Although, up to the instant of its committal, your life has been a blameless one, I cannot, in the absence of any recommendation to mercy on the part of the jury, hold out to you any hope of an amelioration of the sentence which I am now constrained to pass upon you.'

"The judge then assumed the black cap, and pronounced the

usual form of sentence, concluding, 'And may the Lord Almighty have mercy on your soul!' to which aspiration there was a general and fervent rejoinder of 'Amen!'"

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II.

* * * * *

"HOELL GORDON BRINNILOW has been found guilty and sentenced to death, and a trial which has created wide-spread interest throughout the country has come to a close! Few sentences have ever been passed which have provoked so strong an expression of surprise as that which immediately followed the solemnly expressed death penalty. Be the verdict just or not, the delivery of it created something like a shock in court. At the Norwich Court of Assize the good old rule, that a prisoner is entitled to the benefit of a doubt, appears to have been forgotten. Doubt exists in the case which is now the subject of such wide-spread comment. The evidence furnished by the *post-mortem* examination, and the subsequent analysis by Dr. Garland and the experienced and capable London analyst to whom certain portions of the remains were submitted for examination, is doubtful. Though the *post-mortem* appearances described in the evidence are considered by Dr. Garland, Mr. Bond, and the London expert to furnish indisputable proof that Mr. Hawley died from the effects of a vegetable alkaloid, the analytical inquiries have failed to furnish the name of the alkaloid. There has been much talk about atropine, but the atropine theory is practically quashed with the failure of the physiological test. Again, though the medical gentlemen are agreed to consider the symptoms presented by Mr. Hawley before death and the *post-mortem* appearances as indicative of poison, they do not deny that the same symptoms might have been produced and identical appearances have resulted from a purely natural cause. Last, but not least, the most doubtful point of all is to be found in the question, deliberately set aside by judge and jury in the course of the trial, whether Hoell Brinnilow is a sane man, or an eccentric semi-lunatic, subject to hallucinations. This, in our opinion, should have been the main point upon which the counsel retained by the friends of the prisoner should have based the defence, instead of building it on the theory of the crime having

been really committed by the prisoner in a moment of temporary insanity.

“Is it unlikely that a deformed and weakly semi-invalid, doomed to suffer life-long misery as the result of a terrible injury to the spine received in boyhood, should little by little succumb to that insidiously encroaching brain malady, which is a complication not unfrequently to be met with in connection with spinal complaints? Is it beyond possibility that the agitation and excitement produced by the encounter, after so many years of absence, with the cruel enemy of his oppressed and tortured childhood, should have its effect upon the already tottering reason of Hoell Brinnilow? From incipient mania to active frenzy is but a short step, and it may be that, under the latter conditions, the Colegate Street confession was made on the fatal morning of October 2d. If further proofs of the prisoner’s infirm mental condition are wanting, surely they are to be found in the recorded minutes of his demeanor before and during the trial. The mania—if mania it is—is suicidal, if anything. The almost unbroken preservation of composure, when liberty and life hung upon the issue of the proceedings; the remarkable unwillingness to furnish the defending counsel with any assistance; the extraordinary, almost foppish, attention paid to matters of toilet, as though the prisoner’s dock were a favorable situation for the display of elaborate attire and showy jewelry; surely these instances indicate an abnormal condition of mind on the part of the condemned man, and furnish an overwhelming amount of proof in support of the theory we now advance.”

III.

* * *

“It is no exaggeration to say that last night the town of Norwich was ringing with the subject of the decision arrived at by the jury in the case of Hoell Brinnilow, and that a very general feeling exists that the verdict has been hastily given, without due regard to the doubts cast upon the case by the nature of the scientific evidence adduced for the prosecution. Public sentiment runs so high that proposals for petitions to the Queen and the Home Secretary, in furtherance of a mitigation of the sentence passed upon the prisoner, are being put into shape.

With the London papers of this morning the verdict is unpopular, and a hint is held out that in certain distinguished quarters surprise has been expressed at the result of the trial. There is also a rumor that public feeling in the metropolis is also about to take the practical form of a memorial to the Home Secretary in favor of a respite. The same sentiments have found expression in our chief provincial centres, the most striking illustration being at M——, that, in the name of common humanity, it is at least necessary to make an effort to save the unfortunate man, now lying under sentence in Norwich Jail, from the last dread office of the law."

IV.

* * * *

"*Cherchez la femme!* Adoption of the famous piece of advice which has been attributed to Fouché, would lead to no infallible result in the case which has thronged the Norwich Shire-hall for three days, and which ended yesterday with a verdict which no lover of justice will feel eager to dispute. No need to look for the woman, who, all unseen herself, manipulates the strings which move the actors in many a terrible drama of humanity, to deeds which the world shudders at from time to time. The cunning of a *crétin*, the malice of an ape, the thirst for revenge—revenge at any price—upon the man who had vainly besought his pardon for a wrong inflicted many years ago, impelled the miserable perpetrator of this brutal murder to the act which his own guilty conscience afterwards urged him to bare to the light of day. The sickly sentimentalists, who are at all times ready to treat a condemned homicide as a saintly martyr, may promote petitions and organize meetings of protest against the just decision arrived at by the jury in the Brinnilow poisoning case, but it is to be confidently premised that their efforts will be in vain. A justly earned death sentence is not to be remitted, or a reasonable verdict quashed, because the weak-minded of both sexes are apt to indulge in a puerile partiality for petting criminals."

V.

* * * *

"It will be remembered that Mrs. Weather, the house-keeper who has been in the service of the Brinnilow family for years,

was not able to give evidence at the trial. The shock received by the woman—who was the prisoner's nurse in childhood, and is warmly attached to him—when the news of the Colegate Street confession and his subsequent arrest was brought to her, was so severe that it induced a violent epileptic fit. During the convulsions inseparable from the attack, the woman injured her head so severely that it was necessary to convey her to the Norwich Hospital, where, fever and delirium supervening, she has lain for some weeks in a precarious condition. It is reported that a favorable change has taken place in her condition, and that she is slowly recovering."

VI.

* *

"LIDYARD—KAVANAGH.—On November 19th, at Ketton Old Church, Philip Cunningham Lidyard, Bart., of Lidyard Chase, to Rosalind, only daughter of Col. James Kavanagh, late of Madras Army, and of Selbrigg Hall, in the county of Norfolk. Privately, no cards."

CHAPTER II.

THE JOURNAL—CONTINUED.

"NORWICH, *December 21st.*

"YES, they are married; the day which should have been born to the joyous clashing of bridal bells, and died amid rejoicings, has crept upon us stealthily, and sobbed itself to sleep in a storm of driving hail. Scarcely half a dozen persons, myself included, were present at the ceremony. My niece was plainly dressed in travelling attire. The cruel months that have passed over us have robbed her of her bloom. Her charming figure has lost its roundness; her eyes are less bright than I remember them. The bridegroom was paler and more preoccupied than I should have expected Philip to be on the day of his wedding. Time and Fate have wrought sad changes about us and in us since the first lines were written in the Journal of Vagabond George.

"The breakfast, to which we returned, made no pretence of

being anything more than an ordinary morning meal. As I set my foot upon the threshold, which I have not crossed since that fatal night, I looked up, almost expecting to see the shadow that broods over it, looming visibly above the carved escutcheon, waiting to descend.

"Mrs. Kavanagh was not present at the ceremony. She kept her room, as she has kept it these months past. Her state of health gives present cause for grave anxiety—the change in her is terrible to see. Only for a moment I caught sight of her. Did my eyes, in encountering hers, betray my knowledge of her dreadful secret? I hope not! I hope not!

"The newly-married couple have made no preparations for a protracted tour. Their honeymoon will be spent in Paris as quietly as circumstances will admit. Rosalind's anxiety with regard to her mother would have kept her, in defiance of the established custom, resolutely at home, had not Mrs. Kavanagh's veto been put, peremptorily and decidedly, upon the mere suggestion of such an arrangement. The change which has taken place in her is not merely a physical one. The altered state of her temper, the dreadful irritability of her nerves—now relaxed from the maddening tension of suspense unutterable, dread beyond expression, endured in these past months of silent, secret suffering—render a parting between Rosalind and herself absolutely desirable, if the relations between mother and daughter are ever to be re-established on the old footing of affectionate confidence and perfect love. Struck down as he was upon the brink of the fulfilment of his resentful purpose, Hawley has yet, in some measure, revenged himself. He it was who raised the barrier that shuts her out from the object of her heart's dearest devotion. Day by day, hour by hour, his relentless hand, stretched from the grave, has thrust that mother and daughter, inch by inch, farther apart.

"When did this sad fact become apparent to me? On the wedding-day, when the bride—our miserable pretence of breakfast being over—withdrew to make her final preparations for travelling and to take leave of Mrs. Kavanagh.

"The desolate activity which prevails before a departure was going on in the hall, where Philip, my brother James, and myself were waiting for Lady Lidyard's reappearance. Suddenly

the door of Mrs. Kavanagh's private room burst open, and my niece ran out. She was sobbing hysterically—she hardly seemed able to articulate, in the violence of her distress. She took a hurried leave of her father, she absolutely passed me by, and sought refuge in the carriage without a glance at the servants, who had mustered on the steps to give their young mistress their humble good-wishes at parting. Her husband followed her. As her head drooped upon his shoulder—as she turned to him, for the first time in their wedded life, for sympathy and consolation, a few words which escaped her reached *my* ears:

“‘Not a kiss!—scarcely a look or a word! Oh, mamma!—mamma! what have I done to deserve it?’

“The carriage moved on. They were gone—and the dead leaves of last year ran races in the empty avenue. I went back to Norwich that afternoon.”

END OF THE EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

CHAPTER III.

PLEASANT REMEMBERS.

EARLY on the morning of December 3, 1886, a patient was discharged as cured from the Female Accident Ward of the Norwich Hospital.

The patient was a middle-aged woman, of spare figure and respectable appearance. She was of a swarthy complexion, though haggard from recent illness, and the black hair that peeped out from underneath her plain bonnet of brown straw was thickly streaked with white. The nurse who parted from her at the hospital entrance did so with a palpable lack of interest in the patient—the patient's curt farewell expressed no gratitude to the nurse. She descended the steps, which were slippery with frost, with slowness and hesitation, hesitated a moment as if bewildered by the keenness of the wintry air and the dazzling whiteness of the snow which had fallen heavily on the previous night, and now lay thickly in the streets and on the house-tops, and then struck into the carriage drive that leads to

the outer gates. The porter looked out of his lodge as she went through the gates, and gave her a civil good-day. The woman made no response.

"That's a surly one," commented the porter, following her with a glance of disapproval. "Foreign, by the looks of her. I'll give her the benefit of the doubt, as a Christian is bound to. Perhaps she doesn't understand what civility means—in the English language."

Having administered the balm of this charitable conclusion to his own wounded self-respect, the porter returned to his comfortable fireside. The discharged patient walked on. The keen cold air had had its bracing effect upon the nerves which were weakened by long confinement; the consciousness of personal independence, submerged under the recently acquired habit of submission to authority and lessened by long sickness, began to awaken with the sense of freedom; she walked more steadily, though she looked about her doubtfully from time to time, as any ordinary pedestrian might in a strange locality. The site occupied by the Norwich Hospital is situated, as every resident knows, immediately without St. Stephen's Gates. The old path at the foot of and outside the city wall, which formerly led from St. Stephen's Gates to St. Giles's Gates, now forms the wide street known as the Chapel Field Road. The woman pursued her way along the Chapel Field Road for some distance before she turned to the left and entered a narrow thoroughfare.

It was hardly ten o'clock. The tea and bread-and-butter offered her before leaving the hospital she had been unable to touch. Now the pangs of hunger began to assail the convalescent, now the weariness of weakness hung upon her limbs like clogs of lead. The savory smell of fried bacon and coffee came gratefully to her nostrils as she passed the open door of a cheap restaurant of the lower class—a teapot, flanked on one side by a dish of raw chops and on the other by a wicker basket of cloudy-complexioned eggs, and modestly backed by the dirty red curtain which concealed the gastronomic ecstasies of the patronizers of "Faggs's Eating-house" from public view, presented optical evidence of the entertainment to be had within. Pleasant Weather passed on, stopped, hesitated, and then, turning back, entered "Faggs's Eating-house."

The place was small and old-fashioned, but sufficiently clean

within. Wooden partitions insured the privacy of the eaters, who sat at the iron-topped tables discussing late breakfasts or early dinners with appetites of unvarying excellence. These were principally men of the laboring class, and were waited on by a greasy boy in a white apron, and a young woman of down-trodden and untidy appearance, who, when not engaged in attending to the wants of the patrons of Faggs's, was occupied in suckling a baby.

Pleasant Weather sat down at the unoccupied table nearest to the door. The woman approached her, and took her modest order for a pot of tea, a roll, and a fresh egg. The food was brought to her, and she ate with appetite, and then sat resting, looking about her idly, leaning back in the corner between the wooden partition and the wall, her decent bonnet-strings untied and thrown aside, and her worn gloves lying before her on the table.

Little by little, as her worn body revived under the stimulating influence of the nourishment she had taken, the lethargic dulness passed from her mind, the numbing weight that had rested on her brain lifted. Yet another moment, and the veil that hung between her dazed memory and the cruel past was snatched away.

A stranger's voice, coarse and husky and common, speaking on the other side of the partition that divided her from the neighboring table, gave back the master-key that alone might open her locked-up heart: repeated the name that she had not been able to remember.

Hearing it, she rose up and cried out.

A face was thrust over the partition—an ugly, bloated face—and the voice that belonged to it addressed her:

"What's the matter, missus?"

"The matter?" repeated Pleasant Weather.

"You called out, you know," said the slatternly waitress, coming to her side.

"Did I?"

"Quite loud and sharp—'Where is he? Let me go to him!'—just like that."

"Aye, 'tis my way by times."

The man with the bloated face leaned his elbows on the partition.

"If it is your way, missus, it's an uncomfortable way, and I advise you to get out of it. A working-man with a family to support can't afford, in the interests of that family, to bolt a whole crust at a gulp, as my mate here did when you screeched out so sudden just now. 'Where is he? Let me go to him!' says you. If you had meant him as my mate and me was a-talking about at the moment when you screeched and interrupted us, we could have told you where to find him, up to eight o'clock to-morrow morning; up to eight o'clock to-morrow morning, after which time he'll have changed his address. That's what he'll have done. Eh, mate?"

A hoarse laugh sounded in response from the other side of the partition. Other faces were looking out from the other boxes now, and the consciousness of having an auditory stimulated the speaker to fresh flights of humor. He leered at Pleasant Weather with eyes that were still watery from the over-night's debauch; he wagged his head knowingly; his beery breath, as it reached her, crouching in the corner between the wooden partition and the wall, sickened her to loathing.

"'Because why?' says you. Because Brinnilow, the man my mate and me was a-talking about at the time when you screeched—"

"Yes, yes! Go on!"

"Brinnilow's in Norwich Jail. In Norwich Jail is Brinnilow, sentenced to hang for murder. That's where he is, if any one who should be a foreigner, and not able to read the noospapers, should wish to know; and unless a reprieve comes afore eight o'clock to-morrow morning, Brinnilow's a dead man—that's what Brinnilow is. A dead man in a nightcap and a hemp cravat. Screeching again? If you was my wife, missus, you should be broke of that. Broke of that, indeed, you should be. Somebody lend a hand here—the woman's in a fit!"

CHAPTER IV.

PLEASANT FINDS HER MASTER.

WAKING, cold and weak and giddy, from what seemed like a lapse back into the days of delirious semi-consciousness which had succeeded to the shock and the injury of months before, Pleasant Weather found herself lying on a hard horse-hair sofa in a dingy little back room, full of greasy kitchen smells and dilapidated furniture, with the slatternly young waitress bending over her, applying something wet to her forehead.

"You've been poorly," the woman said, in answer to her whispered question. "A fit, the chemist told us it was, and not the first you've had, judging by your looks and the half-healed wound on your head, where the hair has been cut away. You had no business to be out by yourself, and in such hard weather, he said; and all we could do was to hold you till you stopped throwing yourself about, and then let you lie quiet till you came to your senses again."

"I am myself again. Let me get up."

"I'm not stopping you. There's nobody but the boy to attend to the customers. But there's a shilling to pay for the chemist's trouble, and tenpence for your breakfast, before you go."

Pleasant Weather settled the claim from the little store of silver she carried in a worn, old-fashioned purse, and mollified the slatternly waitress with the gift of a small coin. She put on the bonnet which the woman restored to her, shook out the creases from her disordered dress, and pinned her shawl across her sunken bosom. Then she went out of the greasy parlor and passed through the shop without looking round.

Snow was falling in heavy flakes when she reached the street. Scarcely a human creature seemed to be abroad that bitter day. Thinly shawled, lightly shod, she went on through the deepening drifts of snow-powder. And the flakes kept falling—falling—and covering the footprints that she left behind.

Early as it yet was, daylight was already waning. Her unfa-

miliarity with the streets she traversed made her progress difficult. Overtaking, even with her impeded gait, a miserable creature of the vagrant race, who crept along, half-frozen, from door-step to door-step, shouldering the stump of a worn-out shovel, she stopped and asked the boy—for a boy it proved to be—to direct her by the nearest way to the jail.

The boy gave his blue nose a wipe with his ragged sleeve, and considered. Pleasant Weather showed him a penny. Stimulated by the sight of the coin, the boy scratched his head. Pleasant showed him another penny. The boy grinned, became thoughtful, grinned again, and finally delivered himself in the following terms:

“Norwich Jail? On a ’ill it stands—calls it the Castle ’Ill, they dus. Can you hear me, missus?”

“I hear you.”

“It’s my chest being bad makes me talk so queer. I slep’ under a archway last night, and it’s took my voice away—froze it in my chest, like. Give me the tuppence.”

“When you have told me how to get to the place I want, you shall have it.”

“Norwich Jail stands on the Castle ’Ill, lower down, and nigh by the castle: by way of King Street, London Street and the Cattle Market will be the shortest way there, missus. Give me the tuppence.”

“Take it. Stop. I’m a stranger in this place—the names of the streets puzzle me. Show me the way to the jail, and you shall have threepence more. Sixpence more if you take me from there back to the railway station. I shall put my hand upon your shoulder—so—to steady myself, not being strong in my limbs.”

“All right, missus. Come along.”

They moved on together. The falling snow whitened them, the dreary day grew grayer and more desolate as the woman and the boy traversed the lonely streets.

In less time than might have been expected the huge area of the Norwich Cattle Market presented itself to view, intersected by the iron railings of its empty pens, traversed by its broad avenues, surrounded by the purlieus of the old town—a spectacle of emptiness and abandoned desolation. And dominant above it, looming threateningly against its background of wintry sky, its stern and rugged outlines unsoftened by the thickly-falling snow, rose

the ancient keep, once the "white flower" of the castles of the eastern counties to Norman knights and men-at-arms. And below it, inside the line of what was once the castle ditch, huddled a squat, unsightly edifice—the county jail.

Her guide pointed it out with his shovel, pressing closely to her side.

"The jail. Down there, where I'm a-pointing. Folks say there's a man in there going to be hung to-morrow morning. I never see a man hung, but I know a chap who did, and he said it was prime. Did you ever see a man hung, missus?"

She paid no more outward heed to his words, or the loathsome contact of his foul and ragged garments, than if she had been the statue of a woman carved in ice; only she struck her hands together wildly, and made as if she would have torn at those grim unyielding walls with them, and uttered a moaning cry. A wolf might have howled so to her trapped cub across some desolate ravine. And the echo that came back to her across the intervening space came back so shrill and changed in tone that it might have been an answer.

Her guide crept from her side noiselessly, and scudded away, barefooted, through the snow. No need to wait for the money; he had the woman's stolen purse hidden away among his rags. For an instant the clouds in the north-east parted, and the glowing disc of the sun looked redly down upon the world before the icy fog was drawn before it like an impenetrable curtain, shutting out all appeal to the Mercy above from the misery below.

CHAPTER V.

DREAMS.

DREAMS of days and nights strangely confused and intermingled; dreams of solitude, sometimes broken in upon by grave official looks and stern official accents; dreams of high white walls, broken by a barred and grated window, high out of reach, only accessible to passing cloud or bird shadows, and outward light and air; dreams of feverish nights spent in pacing a stone pavement, or, wakeful, lying on a low truckle-bed, listening to

echoing steps receding farther and farther away down long and resonant galleries; dreams of the galleries themselves, traversed in slow procession, and dreams of winding iron staircases, ending in a paved court-yard; dreams of rumbling wheels—a dream, thrice repeated, of a vast hall or chamber, lighted by a great roof lantern, and piled up from floor to ceiling with faces, some of them well known, all bent upon one central object—that object the dreamer; dreams which are strangely real by night, and absolutely so on waking.

A dream of a grave voice, succeeding other voices, and seeming to question the sleeping man. Dreamlike, a voice replying, and though changed and feeble, most like the dreamer's own; a dream of a voice more solemn than any of the others, speaking of death and of the world to come.

Those rumbling wheels succeeding, and the awful hush and quiet of a prison cell, after the noise and bustle of a crowded court of justice.

A dream of a familiar face, of a kindly white-haired gentleman, with traces of sorrow and anxiety deeply lined upon it. Seen across the barrier of a long deal-table, at each end of which sits a warder of the prison, silent and watchful; a dream of an old servant, bent and feeble, sobbing and apparently bowed down with grief; a dream of a grave clergyman who has much to say concerning repentance and justification by faith. And through all the homily, a dream of hammering—hammering in the court-yard beneath this barred window, out of which one can see nothing but the sky. A dream of something black and grim and awful, slowly growing into shape most horrible and dread. But more fraught with terror than all these visions, the presence so awful in its stillness, that stands beside the sleeper's pillow in the lonely, soundless night, looking in his eyes with eyes that he remembers, and holding out its hand. A dream, that last, which brings the cold drops of agony out upon the dreamer's forehead, and wakens him with the loud beatings of his heart. A dream full of agony and terror. But scarcely worse to bear than the dream which haunts the captive always, and of which he is conscious even in the midst of other dreams. The dream of fruitless, hopeless longing, of passionate, empty yearning for one sight never seen, sleeping or waking; one voice never heard, waking or sleeping. Her face and her voice.

And Time flying slowly on, borne on the bats'-wings of these visions. Time which shall soon change the promise conveyed in the words, *I will not betray*, into the assertion, *I have not betrayed*. After which no more dreaming, but the silence and the quiet of a shameful grave in some lost, forgotten nook of that dreadful place; a silence and a quiet unbroken by any sound, save when the shuffling footsteps of a gang of guarded criminals shall pass over the nameless stone that covers the fallen head.

How many hours left? Nineteen. She may come before to-morrow. Even yet.

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CHAPTER VI.

ON THE WAY.

THE Norwich Express, plunging out of Liverpool Street Station, exchanges the gas-lighted obscurity of a foggy London day-break for the frosty brilliance of a snowy morning in the country almost in the twinkling of an eye.

It is not tempting weather to travel in, and even though to-morrow is Christmas Eve the express contains few passengers. There are ugly rumors abroad of trains snowed up in the northern and south-eastern counties, waiting to be dug out by main force of pickaxe and shovel, wielded by sturdy gangs of navvies. Nearly everybody gets out at Ely, except a business-looking first-class passenger for Norwich, whose luggage consists of a small portmanteau and a black valise; and nobody gets in except, at the very minute of starting, a bull-necked, bristly-bearded, rough-greatcoated third-class traveller, who chews tobacco and carries a brown carpet-bag. And the train, leaving clouds of steam and lurid trails of glowing cinders behind it, goes speeding over the iron road, devouring the snow-covered landscape by mouthfuls, as it were, of miles, with the messenger of Life and the messenger of Death aboard her.

Her progress is much delayed. Night has fairly closed in before the old city springs out of the level landscape and the journey is at an end. Leaving the iron horse provendering on coal and water in its own particular stable, we follow the footsteps of

the man with the black valise and the man who carries the brown carpet-bag, both being bound to the same destination.

The only cab which is to be had on this inclement night is chartered by the business-looking first-class passenger who carries the black valise. The address he gives the driver is, "The County Jail."

The hoarse-voiced, bristly-chinned third-class passenger is left stranded at the station. Not a vehicle is attainable. He procures a guide, with some trouble and at a high rate of remuneration, and shouldering his brown carpet-bag, of which he is exceedingly careful—proceeds to tramp it through the snowy streets of Norwich in the direction of the County Jail. When, at last, its black boundary walls loom before him out of the darkness, he is so numbed with the piercing cold that it is some time before he can beat as much life into his frozen fingers as is needed for the ringing of the outer lodge bell. Three minutes elapse before the little iron wicket in the great iron gate opens, and a turnkey's face appears in a halo of lantern-light.

"Oh, it's you, is it? I thought as much," the turnkey says, clanking his keys; "we expected you before lock-up."

The man with the brown carpet-bag explains that the train was late.

"The train was late, eh?" says the turnkey. "Pay the lad and send him away, and come in out of the cold; for it is cold, surely. Ah! so the train was late, you say?"

The turnkey leads the way across a paved quadrangle, at present ankle-deep in snow, towards the entrance of the Jail, over against which stands the governor's house. There are lights in the windows of the governor's house, and the sound of a piano, touched by a light hand, cheerfully tinkles in the distance. For the governor is a family man, with a wife and young daughters who can be merry sometimes, even in the atmosphere of despair.

More clanking of keys behind the inner gate; the man with the brown carpet-bag admitted by another turnkey, to whom he explains that circumstance of the train being late.

"Why, not to deceive you, it don't matter," says the second turnkey; "you won't need a steady hand to-morrow. Even if the train had kept time you would have been late, for the reprieve has come before you. This way for your supper and your bed."

CHAPTER VII.

REPRIEVED.

MORNING, filtering unwillingly through barred windows and heavily-grated skylights, half-blinded with snow; the morning—ushered into this dismal place with groans and sighs and curses of impotent desperation—of Christmas Eve.

It is early, the prison clock being on the stroke of six, but the prison chaplain and the prison surgeon are waiting in the governor's office for the governor. The hammering, that made yesterday and the day before it hideous, breaks out again in the court-yard where the prison vans are kept; but there is a less ominous significance in the sound to-day, as, with creaking and rending, the black beams are dismembered one from another, and relegated to their usual position of dust and obscurity.

The governor, a fresh-colored, portly gentleman, with a military preciseness in his dress and a military heaviness in his firm step, after a short delay has joined those who are waiting in the office. He carries papers—a telegram and an official-looking document—in his hand. His coming sets the party in motion. A warder going before, heralded by more clanking of keys and opening and shutting of iron gates, leads the way to the condemned cell.

The heavy iron trellis-gate which closes it is unlocked, the inner door of wood, strengthened with more iron and closed by a massive running-bolt, is opened. There is a peep-hole in this second door, closed with a slide, through which the warder looked before unbolting it, and announced, in a whisper, "Not in bed; sitting at the table."

He is sitting at the table, fully dressed, when they go in. An official watcher rises from his seat on the bedside and salutes the governor with military precision. The prisoner, whose back is turned to the new-comers, never stirs at the slight bustle that accompanies their entrance. He has writing materials before him. The hand that holds the pen lies relaxed upon the table,

the other shades his face as he leans upon his elbow. Perhaps the prisoner is asleep. Under this supposition, they touch him gently on the shoulder. He shows no sign of waking. Under this supposition, they shake him—not roughly—and call in his ear. He does not move or answer. An obstinate prisoner this.

“Prisoner One Hundred and Twenty, it is my official duty to convey to you the information that the Home Secretary, after earnest consideration of your case, has advised Her Most Gracious Majesty to delay the execution of the capital sentence passed upon you, with a view to obtaining more reliable medical evidence than has yet been given with regard to your mental state at the time of the commission of the crime of which, according to your own confession, and the finding of the jury at your trial, you stand guilty. Prisoner One Hundred and Twenty, you are reprieved.”

Still not a sign, not a sound to indicate that the prisoner hears. Take his hand down from his face now, and look at him as it falls helplessly to his side. There is comprehension in his eyes of the words that have been spoken, but intelligence has been stricken out at one blow from the drawn and distorted face. Let human Mercy reprieve, respite, or pardon the prisoner condemned so lately by stern Justice to die a shameful death—another power has been beforehand, and stamped on every paralyzed limb, in every paralyzed feature, its own irrevocable sentence of imprisonment for life.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW FALLS.

AN hour later, Mrs. Kavanagh's elderly maid, carrying a small tray with the usual morning cup of tea and thin slice of bread-and-butter upon it, knocked at the door of her mistress's bedroom. The door was locked. The woman knocked again, and listened anxiously for any sounds that might be overheard of moving on the part of the inmate of the room.

In another moment the key was turned in the lock, her mis-

tress admitted her, and locked the door again behind her. The woman's face, as it looked into that other, so changed and worn with mental agony and nights of unrest, betrayed the anxiety she felt. "No sleep last night. Walking up and down—down and up, as usual," was her unspoken comment. "How long is this going on? Where and how will it end?"

Her mistress drank the tea eagerly, but rejected the bread-and-butter with feverish disgust, and resumed her uneven walk backward and forward across the bedroom—from the door to the window, up and down from the foot of the bed, which bore no traces of occupation by a sleeper—into the boudoir beyond, and so back once more to her original starting-point, as aimlessly and as tirelessly maintaining her unceasing motion as some wild creature pent in a cage. Her loose morning-robe hung in folds over her wasted bosom; her sleeves dropped back from the arms that had lost their firm, healthful roundness, as she impatiently pushed back the plentiful light-brown hair that was coiled in an ample knot behind her head and strayed about her ears. A few lines of silver had always mingled with its beauty. The lines had widened to streaks—streaks which, almost visibly, encroached upon one another. It had been her husband's boast that she had never looked half her actual age. A stranger seeing her, worn and sunken as she now appeared, would have guessed at the number of years unsparingly—a stranger would have added, "The wreck of what must have been a beautiful woman—twenty years ago."

The elderly maid drew aside the window-curtains and unbarred the shutters, letting the cold December daylight penetrate into the room through the softly-tinted silk blinds. She renewed the nearly-extinguished fires in both rooms, moving softly and with elaborate care not to disturb her mistress.

"When will you have done?" Mrs. Kavanagh broke out, impatiently. "You move as silently, you look as solemnly, as if there were death in the house. Are there any letters? Have the newspapers come? You don't know? You haven't looked? Perhaps they have been taken into the library. How dare you disobey my orders? Every newspaper that comes into the house is to be brought first to me."

A violent fit of coughing interrupted her speech. The elderly maid hurried to her assistance, and supported her to a chair.

She beat the air with her hands in the agonizing endeavor to recover her breath. Slowly, and by degrees, under the anxious ministrations of the faithful attendant, the more distressing symptoms of the spasmodic bronchial attack under which Mrs. Kavanagh was laboring subsided. She made use of her recovered breath—she employed her unimpeded speech, in reiterating her order with regard to the newspapers.

“Go and get them. Tell your master, if necessary, that I have sent for them. Do you hear?”

The elderly maid replied, quietly and respectfully, “My master is not in the house, ma’am; my master breakfasted early, and drove the dog-cart to the station to catch the early train. He left a message for you, with his love, that he had gone to Norwich, and was not to be expected back till late in the afternoon.”

She took her tray and left the room. Outside the door she shook her head. “Worse and worse, for all the doctor says,” she muttered. “She doesn’t speak like herself—she doesn’t look like herself. She’s not fit to be alone, and yet she will have nobody with her. The news that brings me word of my young mistress’s home-coming will be good news to me.”

Mrs. Kavanagh resumed her restless walk while the servant was absent. In a few moments the woman returned. One letter, directed to her mistress, had arrived by the early post. The boy who usually brought the newspapers was late on that particular morning.

Her mistress impatiently dismissed her with orders to watch for the coming of the messenger. She locked the door when she was once more alone, and not till then looked at the letter. The first glance at the handwriting of the address told her from whom it came. The tears sprang to her burning eyes—she put her lips to the paper on which Rosalind’s hand had rested, and crushed the letter against her bosom as if it had power to allay the anguish of her tortured heart. “News—news from my darling! I can hardly make out the words, my eyes ache so. I can’t hold the paper in these unsteady hands. Oh, my God! if she only knew to what kind of creature she sends her tender, innocent kisses, and her pretty, loving words! I’m not worthy to read her letter standing—I’ll read it on my knees.” She dropped on her knees and read the letter. “She and her husband have had enough of Paris. Her father has frightened them with accounts of my ill-

ness. They're coming home at once. Oh, stay away, for Heaven's sake! How can I bear any more agony than I'm bearing now? To have her close to me—to see her, and not to dare to take her in my arms, lest the touch of me should blight her—to be afraid to kiss her, lest my guilty lips should blister her innocent cheek! What shall I do? Cable to Paris! Too late! But, on the chance of stopping them, I will!"

She rose to her feet with the difficulty of physical weakness, and hurried into the adjoining room. Here stood her writing-table, with its load of papers, its row of prettily-bound account-books, and all the dainty paraphernalia which the mistress of a house finds necessary to the settlement of her arrears of correspondence and the conduct of her business affairs. In one of the drawers belonging to it were several of the blank forms issued by the Submarine Telegraph Company. In her feverish haste she tore the drawer out bodily and scattered its contents upon the carpet. Before she could stoop to collect them the musical clock upon the mantel-piece—a handsome specimen of French buhl and brass-work, surmounted by a figure of Time—struck the half-hour after seven, and played its fragment of an operatic air. In an instant the unhappy woman's thoughts were diverted from Rosalind—in an instant her feverish energy deserted her—the feverish brilliance faded out of her eyes as she remembered what event the expiration of another half-hour might bring to pass. The distant opening and closing of the hall door vibrated through her nerves like an electric shock. Had the newspapers arrived? Was the maid, with the inquisitiveness of her profession and class, looking through them before she brought them to her mistress? Should she see, upon the opening of the door, written in her attendant's face, the knowledge of the horrible secret that was dragging its guilty possessor, inch by inch, nearer to the grave? What might not have happened in the twenty-four hours that had elapsed since the publication of the last intelligence from Norwich Jail? Had the prisoner's courage faltered?—his determination been shaken in the contemplation of the approach of death?—had he betrayed?—would he yet betray the woman who had bidden him kill—and save her?

The minutes were going by. Not long to wait now for the newspapers. Would they contain, in default of that revelation which should strike woe and agony and desolation unutterable

home to the hearts that loved her, the news of pardon or respite? Was she so lost a creature that the thought of such a result brought her no relief—nothing but increase of dread? “Do I wish him dead?” she asked herself—and the answer came back inexorably in the affirmative. She wished him dead! What peace of mind was there for her as long as he lived the sharer of her ghastly secret? None.

The hands of the clock moved on. At eight o'clock the execution had been appointed to take place. At eight o'clock, if nothing had happened to prevent the law from taking its final course, this agony of suspense must end.

A London reporter, in the exercise of his profession, had visited Ketton Old Church a few days before. The published record of his visit contained, among various local details, the account of an interview with the parish sexton.

“I was one of them that rang the peal of bells for the old Squire's wedding,” the sexton was reported to have said, “with others that are most of 'em dead and gone to-day. I rang 'em again when his only son was born; I tolled the great bell, singly, for the old Squire's burial; and if twenty rectors stand in my way I shall toll it on the day on which the young Squire dies.”

She dragged up the blinds roughly and clumsily, and undid the bolts of the French windows that opened upon the terrace, and threw them wide. There was no wind, though the keen, icy atmosphere pierced her to the marrow, and for the moment took away her breath. But she went out, thinly shod and lightly clad as she was, upon the terrace, and stood there, listening and looking. Far and near upon the face of the desolate landscape not a sign of life presented itself; not even a half-frozen bird rustled in the yews and laurels of the half-buried garden; the cold-gray sky seemed like an overarching vault of stone. And steadily, relentlessly, ceaselessly, as it had fallen for days past, fell the cruel, beautiful, pitiless snow.

She coughed and turned back, shivering, into the room. The melting snow that clung to her shoes and the borders of her garments, made patches of wet on the delicate carpet. She approached the mantel-piece for the purpose of looking at the clock, and, for the first time catching her own reflection in the glass

surmounting it, drew back with a shudder. And as she looked, with hollow, conscience-stricken eyes, upon the ruin of her beauty, the reflection of another face glided into view from behind the image of her own—the face of Pleasant Weather.

She knew the face, changed and marred as it was. She recognized the house-keeper, and her first impulse was one of anger. She spoke to the women harshly, pointing to the window by which she had entered from the garden.

“What do you mean by intruding upon me in my room after this fashion?” she said. “What do you want here? Better go by the way you came before I ring for the servants to turn you out of the house.”

“Ring for the servants, mistress,” said Pleasant. “What I have got to say can be said before them; what I have got to do can be done before them.” She laughed—her hollow, mirthless laugh; she fastened her strange black eyes devouringly upon Mrs. Kavanagh’s face and figure. “You were looking in the glass when I came in, mistress. Not much in the face it gives you back to-day that might serve you for the tempting of a man to his ruin at your need—nor ever was, to my thinking. But one thought different. You know him I speaks of—my master; my master that I carried in these arms as a baby; my master as I’ve nursed and watched and tended—child and man; my master as lies in jail to-day for doings that were your doings—doomed to die a death that should be your death!”

Exposure had almost extinguished her voice; she spoke in a hoarse, deep whisper, and eked her meaning out with the fierce glances of her wild, black eyes, and the gestures of her lean, brown hands.

“How does Pleasant come to know the secret might you ask, mistress, by those twitchings of your dead-white lips? Through watching and following, I makes answer; through creeping and tracking, and laying low more times than one. The folk I come of are cunning in their ways, and of long patience when waiting is like to sweeten revenge for mouths that water for it. What grudge did I owe you and yours, ask you dumbly with those lips again? For taking of my darling’s heart from me, his almost mother; for wringing it, and fevering it, and poisoning his days and nights with bitterness and longing. ’Twas another I suspected his mind set on at first; but Time and Chance opens

my eyes to the truth. When I tells him what knowledge has come to me through watching and spying, one evening, betwixt dusk and dark; when I tells him how you and your sweetheart as was, but is no longer, meets by the Shrieking Pits out yonder on the sly; when I tells him—I wish my tongue had rotted in my head before the words were spoken!—as much of what passes between you as has reached my ears; and how, that if money be not found to pay off your threatening *bau*, you're a ruined woman; when I hears him cry out bitterly, as if his heart were split with a knife-stroke, then I guesses it—not afore. Takes he straightway to watching and spying, nigh as cleverly as me, and finds the rest of the secret out for himself. Then one night comes he to my room and lays hands on something that I keeps by me for life and death, kill or cure. And when I expostulated with him—having kept it by me for another purpose than the purpose of drabbing vermin that troubles *you*—what is it I gets in answer? 'I love her,' my master says, 'heart and soul I'm hers! Life or death, I'm hers! Our fates are linked together, and the end that comes to her will find me ready and waiting.' So I denies him no more. And that night the footsteps, which have been drawing nearer and nearer for months past, stops dead." If she had known whose footsteps those had been, and through what tangled mazes of Time and Circumstance they had travelled on to their appointed halting-place! But she never was to know. She struck her hands together with the old passionate gesture, and went on:

"Then happens what you knows on, and Pleasant Weather is struck down helpless when she should be up and doing. Out of hospital comes I, on this cruel day, months after, with a blank emptiness where memory should be, and even my darling's name grown so strange in my ears that the mere hearing of it, spoken by a stranger's lips, strikes me down like a bolt from Heaven. But my blood comes back to me, and it is: to the jail, before 'tis too late, and speak the words out that will save him, spite of the oath he made me swear. So I makes my way there, beats upon the stones with my bare hands, and calls to them in authority to hear me. Says them at the gate, "You're mad or drunk, or both together.' Then it is borne into my mind that, though one way may have failed, another one may answer. Back to this place I tramps, my purse having been stolen.

Tramps out of nine miles five, and gets a lift in a straw-wagon for the other four. Night passes—how I hardly know—and morning finds me waiting and lurking and watching for the lucky moment as is to bring me face to face, mistress, with you. Now you know how I come here and why I come, mistress. Back with me to Norwich Jail as fast as carriage-wheels and horseflesh can carry us, and tell the folk there what you know. Time flows on quickly, and Fate; but Pleasant will outstrip 'em both, no fear of it. Do you shake your head, mistress? By my God! weak as I was not long since, I have strength enough now. Strength enough to tear your heart out, if need be, and carry that to Norwich Jail, and bid them as shut their ears to Pleasant's pleading read your secret there."

She held up her lean, brown fingers, curved like talons, and shook them in the other's face.

The conscience-stricken, terrified woman before her crouched and shuddered as the furious creature drew nearer—nearer still. Her eyes dilated with the vacant fixity of terror; her loosened hair had fallen about her face. In silence they confronted one another—the woman whom he had loved, and the woman who had loved him. And, breaking that deadly silence, came the musical chime of the clock upon the mantel-piece striking the hour of eight. Close upon that sound another followed: the first deep, sonorous stroke of the church bell.

Mrs. Kavanagh raised her head. She drew herself to her full height; color returned to her lips, light came back into her eyes again. As the solemn bell tolled for the second time, she lifted her hand.

"Too late," she said. "Too late to save your master now. The bell that rang when the world began for him, rings now because it has ended. Listen to the bell."

For the third time the bell tolled. In that instant, as she turned her head aside, Pleasant Weather sprang upon her. The two women struggled and swayed together, locked in a deadly embrace.

With those frenzied eyes staring close to her own, with that fierce breath beating on her cheek, with those lean, brown fingers clutching at her throat, courage and the love of life awoke in her. The rare strength that is associated with perfect physical development, the noble stature that distinguished her above

other women, did her service now in the hour of desperate need. But the terrible ordeal through which she had passed, the wasting anxiety, the agonizing dread of the past and of the present, had slowly but surely sapped the foundations of that magnificent vitality. Even in the moment when she most seemed to prevail, a deadly stupor crept upon and overwhelmed her—a numbed sensation she had felt of late weighed upon her limbs—the cold drops of exhaustion broke out upon her forehead. Her eyes closed, her muscles relaxed, the worn out heart ceased to beat. As the body sank downward—downward—Pleasant Weather sank with it, and crouched upon the carpet beside it, waiting, in her frantic lust of blood, to crush out the first signs of reviving consciousness with those strenuous, sinewy, lean, brown hands. And the bell sounded for the fourth time.

There came a sound of hurrying footsteps outside. There came a knocking at the locked door. A voice cried, “Mamma, mamma, open the door!—it is I, your daughter, come back to you. Oh, for God’s sake, open the door!” The eager hands tried the bedroom door, and the door that led into the drawing-room. Locked these, also! More hurrying of feet, and a man’s voice calling, “Break open the door!”

Pleasant Weather rose from her crouching position; she looked this way and that, dazedly, uncertainly. Even as she hesitated a dreadful change passed over the face of Mrs. Kavanagh; the eyes opened—fixed in the immutable stare of death—and the dying hand, at the bidding of the inexorable Will, pointed to the way of escape.

The French windows, standing open, with the snow drifting—drifting in. With one wild glance behind her, Pleasant went out by them quickly. She crossed the terrace and traversed the garden unseen; and the falling snow obliterated her footprints as she went.

As they broke in the door, the bell sounded for the eighth time, and then stopped. The news of the reprieve had come to Ketton Old Church.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JOURNAL—CONCLUDED.

“SELBRIGG HALL, *February 2nd, 1887.*

“So with the course of time the events foreshadowed in my dream of that night at the inn at Hull have come to pass. The warning so mysteriously conveyed to me has been fulfilled. And upon the old house of my fathers—across the well-remembered scenes of my boyish remembrances, even as the shadow descended in the vision—the shadow has fallen now. Of sorrow and disaster and death those nearest and dearest to me have tasted the bitterness—a bitterness unmingled for them, God be thanked, with disgrace or shame! The cruel secret of *her* tortured past lies buried with Hawley in his grave—lies buried with *her* in hers; and is as surely hidden in my breast, and perhaps in one other stirred by living pulses, as though it were covered, yards deep, with the church-yard mould.

“Dead! Catherine dead! Strange, strange to write the word in connection with her. Strange to speak it. Stranger to see the place vacant which once she held, to miss the familiar voice, the familiar face; to know the gracious charm which drew all hearts towards my brother’s wife, and made home home in cordial verity, broken, dispelled, vanished, like the December snows. Perhaps, most strange of all, to recognize, as I must, in the Hand that dealt the blow, mercy to hers—mercy to her.

“It was on the day fixed for the execution. Her health had been failing for some time; her condition, aggravated by anxiety and suspense, was such as to give my brother cause for anxiety. Rosalind and Philip were on their way back from Paris—my niece firmly persuaded, as I learn from her husband, that her presence was urgently needed at her mother’s side. In absence, the slight estrangement that had of late arisen between them was forgotten. Nothing was remembered then but the faithful love, the tender cherishing of years. Lady Lidyard and her husband travelled all night, and arrived at an early hour in the

morning. As they stepped into the carriage, waiting to take them from the station, the bell of Ketton Old Church began to toll—they knew well why and for whom. A sad, strange welcome for a bride and bridegroom. But sadder still the home-coming, when frightened servants met them at the door; when they tried, vainly, to gain entrance into Mrs. Kavanagh's room, and, alarmed by the silence within, perhaps with some dreadful premonition of the truth overshadowing them already, summoned assistance, and caused the door to be broken in.

"The French windows leading to the terrace stood widely open to the piercing December cold and the heavily falling December snow. Entrance might have been gained that way, if any one had thought of it. With the white flakes resting unmelted on her hair and on the bosom that was never to stir again to the throbbing of life's warm pulses, they found her lying dead.

"Dead! In loneliness, without a loving heart to lean upon, without a loving hand to cling to in that supreme and awful moment—the Mysterious Messenger had found her.

"Dead! In my dreams I see, as I saw it afterwards, the agony and terror of that frozen look. It changed and softened by-and-by. The last remembrance of her that her husband and her daughter cherish is one of calm, unearthly beauty; of sternly-smiling repose. Of the grief of those who loved her I say nothing. An anguish like theirs only time may soften and heal. Perhaps, in the constant devotion of his son and daughter, in the love of their children, by-and-by my brother may find content, if not happiness, in the years to come.

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"Upon one other who loved her—how madly, how devotedly, with what terrible self-sacrifice I dare not even now suffer myself to guess—the blow, if ever it falls, will fall with merciful lightness. A few days since I visited Norwich with a purpose. My purpose took me to the jail. My order, obtained from the authorities, admitted me without delay. The prisoner whom I desired to visit has been removed to the jail hospital, a brighter, more cheerful place than one would expect to find within such gloomy gates. There were bright texts about the whitewashed walls, and a handful or two of spring flowers standing in a common mug on the deal-table sweetened the air. The prisoner

whom I went to visit is paralyzed, but he suffers little pain, and there is reason to hope that he may even recover the partial use of the suspended physical faculties one day. Memory of the past is a merciful blank to this prisoner. His consciousness of the present is the consciousness of a child. The worn and faded creature with the dim black eyes and the black hair turning gray, who watches him with such an agony of solicitude and care, has been his attendant ever since he can remember. He is content in her presence, and she only lives to serve and cherish him in his need.

“This prisoner stood under sentence of death a little while ago, but merciful recognition in high quarters of certain exonerating features in the case dictated a reprieve, which, in the face of later contingencies which have arisen, may, it is not unlikely, even be followed by the pardon of the Crown.

“Little more to write—little more to tell. Few the blank pages remaining in the book. The end once reached—the record once completed, what remains? Destruction. For I recognize, as I never recognized before, that there is danger in keeping it. My heart will never betray *her* secret; my lips will never speak it, but in event of my illness—in event of my sudden death; to any prying eye—to any idle curiosity—my hand might reveal it as long as this Journal remains undestroyed.

“Burn it! Burn it! The portrait, too—the weapon which Fate gave to her dead enemy. I have never looked upon it since that night, but ever since I have worn it, hidden about me. Burn them both before it is too late!”

CONCLUSION OF THE EXTRACT FROM THE JOURNAL.

The fire had devoured the written pages and reduced the leather covers of the Journal to a crumbling mass. When George Kavanaugh took the portrait from its hiding-place and dropped it into the heart of the red glow, it leaped up in a bright flame, and, in an instant, was gone.

He took his hat and the knotted stick that had been his companion over many a mile of rough walking at home and afar, and went out. The sun was setting as he passed over Yelmerton Common. Upon a knoll, covered with withered heath, between

the matted stems of which the young fronds of bracken were already springing, a man sat with his elbows on his knees and his face turned towards the deepening glow of crimson in the west. A child played at his feet—a dark-skinned, elfin-locked little creature.

Both the man and the child were of the gypsy race. The smoke of the camp-fires of their people rose up against the horizon little more than a mile away. As George Kavanagh's glance followed the direction of the slanting lines of bluish vapor, the old wild longing, the old wandering instinct stirred and revived in the vagabond again. He stooped and touched the man upon the shoulder. He spoke to the gypsy in the gypsy tongue. The man started round and recognized him.

A few rapid sentences were exchanged, and they parted. George Kavanagh nodded to the elfish child and threw a coin to her as he turned away. The child snatched at the silver and hid it in her dress, and went on playing with a toy she had found. It was an empty medicine-bottle of dark-blue glass, and she had tied it about the neck with a red string.

At dawn, upon the morrow, he stood in Ketton Church-yard beside a lonely grave. Pale February snowdrops and sturdy violets clustered above the heart of the silent sleeper who rested there.

"To the Memory of Catherine Kavanagh."

So ran the inscription, deeply cut in the cross of polished granite that marked the last earthly abiding-place of his brother's second wife.

He stooped and gathered a blossom or two, and hid them in his breast, before he moved from the spot. His knapsack was strapped upon his back, ready for the journey—his stout stick was in his hand—he had written the farewell he dared not trust himself to utter, and left it on his table over night. Perhaps they were reading it even then.

Her grave had been made upon a mossy slope rising at the southern end of Ketton Church-yard, and sinking away into a green valley starred with the golden cups of the daffodils this spring.

Here was another grave with a name on it that he had known

—the grave of the murdered man. He paused a moment there before he went away. The incense of the vernal fields breathed in the keen air that stirred the white locks on his uncovered head. The sun shone brightly over the familiar landscape, upon which the vagabond's eyes rested for the last time. No shadow darkened on it as he turned away and left them there together. Left them there together, waiting—with a few feet of earth, a few sods of springing grass between them—until that day when all that is hidden shall be revealed, and all human mysteries made known before the judgment seat of God.

17

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
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
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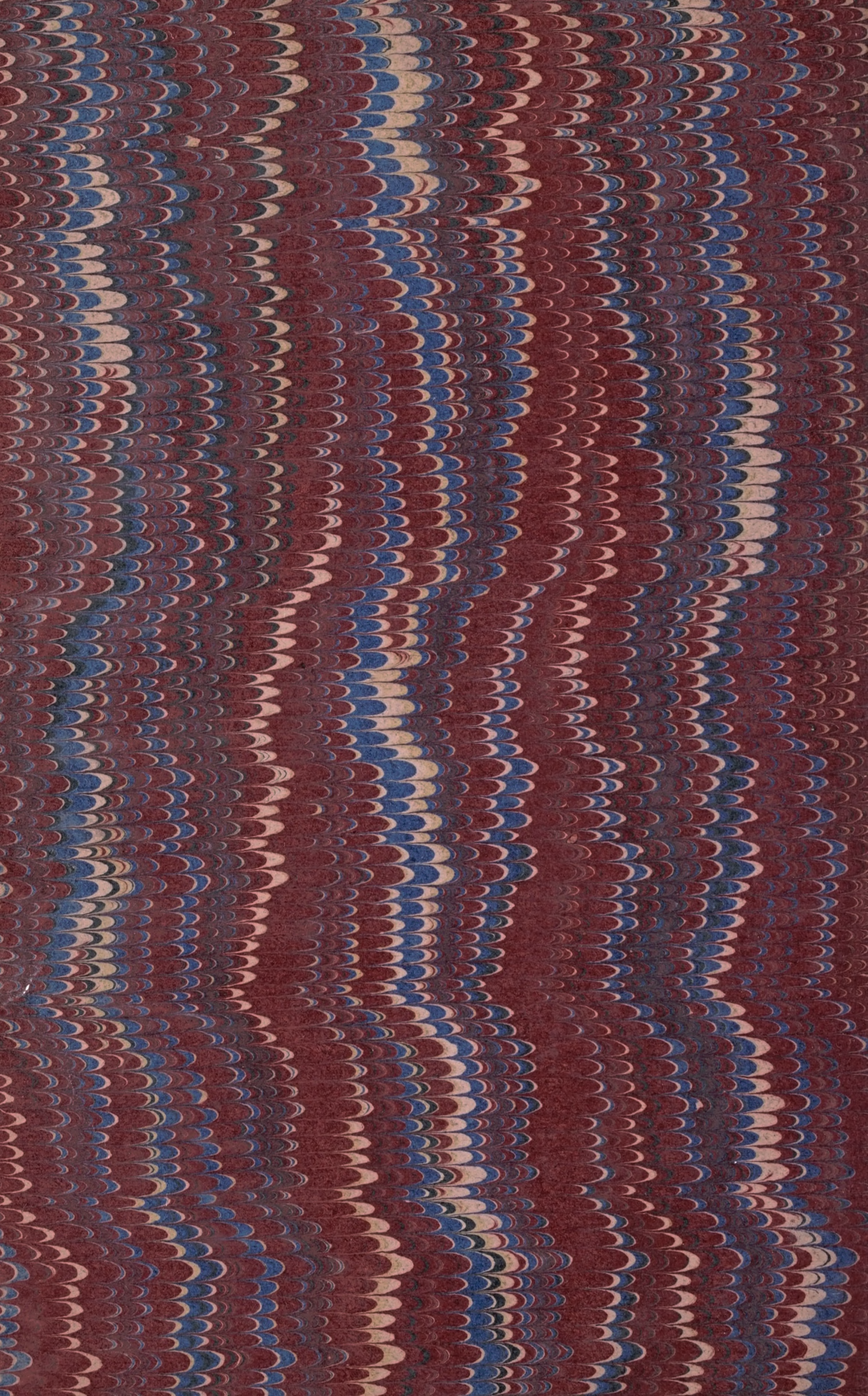
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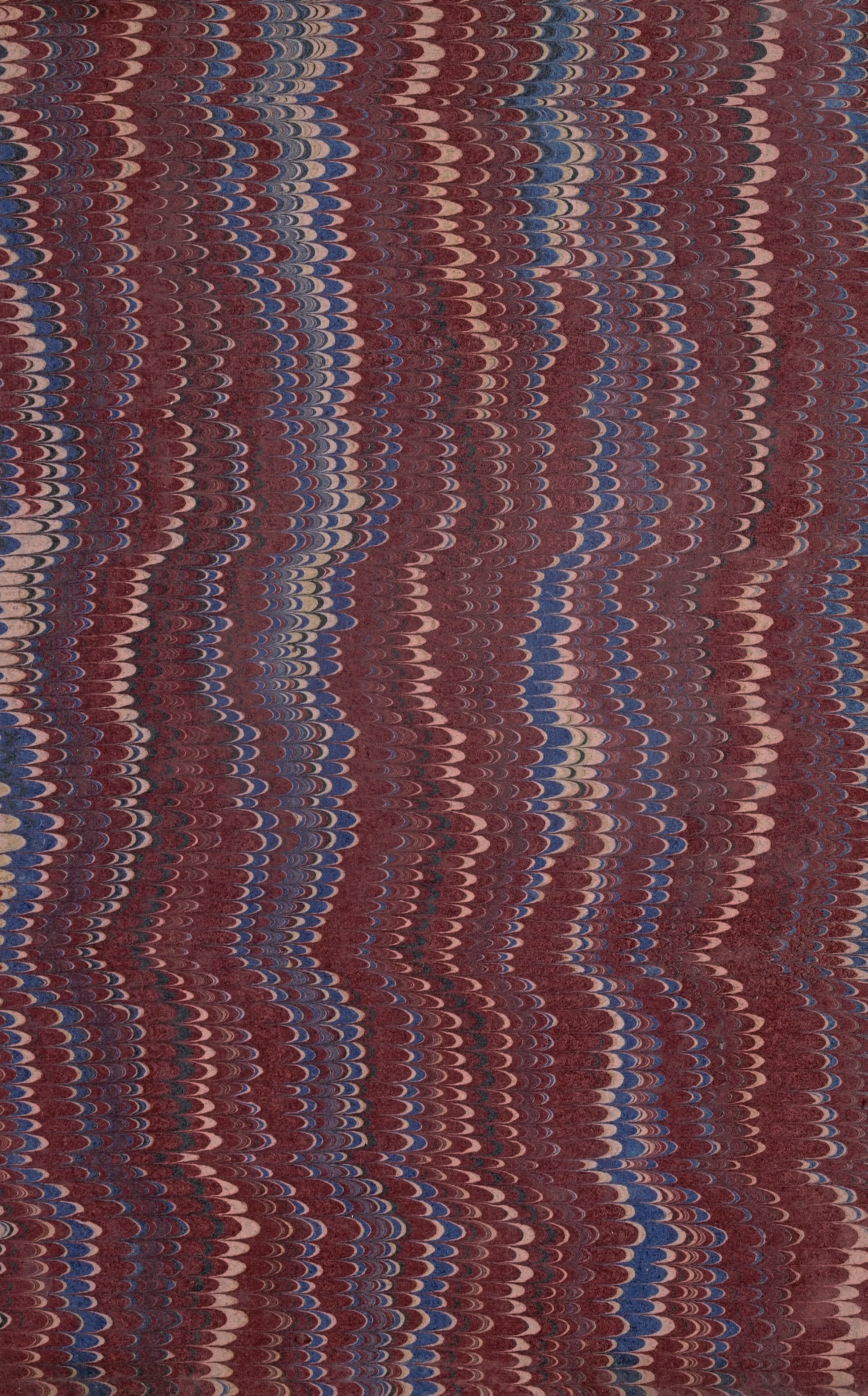
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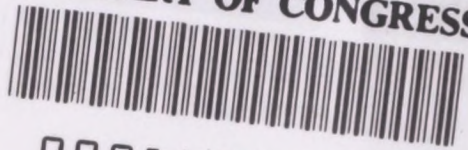
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